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"VANCE SKIS IN JEANS": VERMONTERS RALLY AGAINST J.D VANCE'S VACATION TO SUGARBUSH

COURTESY PHOTO

Protestors gathered in Waitsfield, Warren, Vt. and at Sugarbush Ski Resort last weekend to protest Vice President J.D Vance's Vermont vacation, his verbal attack on Ukrainian President Zelensky and the Trump administration's policies.

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Managing Editor

Vermonters are known for being welcoming, but not to everyone — and if there is one thing they are protective of, it's their ski mountains. When Vice President J.D. Vance arrived at Sugarbush Ski Resort in the Mad River Valley with his family for a ski vacation this past weekend, he was met by over a thousand protestors in Waitsfield and Warren, Vt. and at the mountain opposing his visit and the Trump administration. Meanwhile, a smaller group of locals took to the streets in a counterprotest, celebrating Vance's arrival.

The Valley Reporter first broke the news on Monday, Feb. 24 that the vice president and his family had plans to ski at Sugarbush, with reservations at The Pitcher Inn in Warren, Vt. from Feb. 28 to March 1. Locals quickly mobilized on Reddit, Front Porch Forum and other social media platforms to organize protests. Leaders of Indivisible Mad River Valley — the local branch of the larger Indivisible progressive movement — placed advertisements in the Waterbury Roundabout and The Valley Reporter to spread the word of

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES RAISES TUITION 4.5% TO OVER $90,000

By HUGO ZHANG
News Editor

The Middlebury Board of Trustees approved a 4.5% increase in the annual undergraduate cost of attendance at its Feb. 7–8 meeting, raising the comprehensive fee from $86,850 to $90,756. At the same meeting, the trustees learned that the college's budget deficit for the 2025 fiscal year is now expected to reach $14.1 million, about $5 million higher than the $8.9 million gap projected in October.

This most recent change in Middlebury's price will mark a nearly 50% increase in the college's cost of attendance over the past decade, starting at $61,046 during the 2015–2016 academic year. Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration David Provost said that this year's increase is comparable to Middlebury's peer institutions.

"Increasing [the comprehensive fee] at 4.5% next year reflects the realities of our cost structure and our commitment to providing unmet needs to all Middlebury students," Provost told The Campus. "Most of our NESCAC peers, Williams, Amherst, Bowdoin, Bates, Colby, they increased from 4% to 5.5% last year because inflation was high."

Following the 4.5% increase, Middlebury College's tuition will rise from $67,100 to $70,120, room and board from $19,250 to $20,116, and the Student Government Association fee from $500 to $520 for 2025–2026 academic year.

"The tuition normally goes up in the 3% to 4% range," Provost said, adding that they would normally increase at 3.5%, as happened last year.

"Our board made that decision in January and we assumed inflation was going to fall off like was predicted, [but] it did not," Provost shared. "So the 4.5% really reflects a slight catch-up to what we incurred this past year, with an additional 1% from 3.5% to 4.5%."

Despite the increase in the comprehensive fee, Provost stated that students receiving financial aid will not be disadvantaged, and that they will receive a similar match in funding to compensate for the increase in cost.

"If the tuition is going up a thousand dollars, your financial aid package would go up a thousand," Provost elaborated.

The report Provost presented to the Board indicated that Middlebury the Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS) alone accounted for a $8.7 million deficit, primarily due to low enrollment, which has led to lower-than-expected tuition revenue.

To address this, Executive Vice President and Provost Michelle McCauley updated trustees on a three-year plan

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AFC revokes after-hours access after wave of thefts, damages

IDANESI OJIOR / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The AFC has recently seen several thefts and damages to its space, prompting the decision to lock its doors to the community after 4:30 p.m.

By ABHIR SURI
Contributing Writer

The Anderson Freeman Resource Center (AFC) — a space dedicated to fostering community for diverse students on campus — has permanently revoked after-hours access to the building after a recent series of thefts and acts of vandalism. What began as the occasional disappearance of kitchen utensils has escalated into the theft of common space pillows, destruction of property and the general misuse of a facility meant to be a sanctuary for students in need of a safe space.

The AFC, which serves as a home away from home for many students, particularly BIPOC, first generation and LGBTQ+ students, has long struggled with issues of respect and maintenance. Rani Basnet '26, a BIPOC fellow for the AFC, expressed her frustration with the recent incidents.

"It's just really disheartening," Basnet said. "I've seen more disrespect from students who are not marginalized, which is like, our resource center is specifically a support center for marginalized students."

The AFC salon — a hard-won resource established last year that provides hair care for students with textured hair — has been particularly affected by the thefts. Edge brushes and other hair care supplies have been frequently taken from the space.

"People just kept stealing… people steal the games as well. In the hair salon, we've had a lot of different supplies stolen," Basnet added.

The recent wave of incidents has led the AFC to take a firm stance against the theft, publicly addressing the issue on social media. A Feb. 8 Instagram post by the AFC called for more accountability, urging students to recognize the gravity of their actions and the broader implications for those who rely on the AFC.

"A practically defunct kitchen due to having most of the cooking and baking items taken; a salon missing items and also irreparably

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ADMINISTRATION PLANS TO CRACK DOWN ON STUDENT PARKING VIOLATIONS

IDANESI OJIOR/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Public Safety is working with administrators to add unpaid parking tickets to student bills.

By AUDREY SNOWBECK
Contributing Writer

Recent proposals have sought to improve parking availability on campus for faculty and staff by penalizing students who receive parking tickets, suggesting they should be unable to graduate or register for courses until all fines are paid. Parking permits issued for temporary medical conditions are also being reevaluated under the umbrella of the Center for Health & Wellness to ensure only students who need the accessible spots qualify for them.

The Department of Public Safety Lieutenant Rick Whitney explained some of these developments in parking on campus in an email to The Campus.

"When members of our community park their vehicles in violation of the parking policies, it can lead to critical challenges for college operations, create unsafe situations that may impede emergency services and limit the ability of students, faculty, and staff to park in the lots designated by their parking permits," Whitney wrote.

He noted that when students park in faculty lots overnight,

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Board of Trustees raises tuition 4.5% to over $90,000

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to ensure the financial viability of MIIS, including measures such as phasing out specialized programs with low enrollment, enhancing digital student tools, launching new programs and working with the Language Schools and other universities on opportunities to collaborate.

"The Schools Abroad and Language Schools have been operating with a profit for the past number of years," Provost stated. "The college and the institute normally lose money, and the college has operated at an operating deficit, so our expenses have exceeded our operating revenue for the last decade."

He added that the relationship between tuition increases and Middlebury's current financial deficit is weak, noting that Middlebury does not depend on tuition for its endowment. Provost said that each 1% increase in tuition adds about $1.2 million in revenue, adding that Middlebury has had financial deficits ranging from $3 to $20 million over the last decade, unlike most other peer institutions that either do not have deficits or quickly correct such gaps when they emerge.

"We have Language Schools, we have the Institute, but still, even at the undergraduate college, we have more people," Provost said, adding that some benefits for faculty and staff differ from other NESCAC colleges.

While health benefits were a notable positive area in the Staff Council's survey last year, concerns over faculty compensation and staff's "skill matrix" pay scale remain thorny issues for a college struggling with financial deficits.

Provost added that the college has no intention of reducing costs through cuts to academic areas.

"We're not going to change what's going on in the classroom, the number of faculty," he added. "What we spend on our instructional costs in the classroom is very comparable to our [NESCAC] peers."

Vice President for Advancement Dan Courcey echoed Provost, noting the success of Middlebury's current fundraising campaign "For Every Future: The Campaign for Middlebury."

"We're in the middle of a campaign which started on July 1, 2021 and we thought we'd be raising by June 30, 2028, upwards of $600 million," Courcey said. "The truth is that we are now at $513 million towards that $600 million goal, so we are two years ahead of schedule on our campaign."

A report Courcey shared with The Campus shows that Middlebury used to fundraise an average of $40 million annually before the start of this campaign and now averages $100 million per year.

"The campaign is for all of Middlebury, so it's not just the college," Courcey mentioned. "That's for people both at Monterey and the Language Schools and Bread Loaf and the undergraduate college throughout Middlebury."

Courcey also explained the campaign's key priorities and highlighted the remarkable progress in each.

For financial aid and scholarships, $160 million has been raised toward the $215 million access goal, and $96 million toward the $120 million goal of "academic excellence." Fifty million dollars has been raised toward the $70.5 million "experience" goal, while $38 million has been collected for the $117 million intended for new buildings and renovations.

Courcey admitted that fundraising is not always an easy process as higher education increasingly becomes a partisan issue in the U.S.

"Not everybody loves Middlebury, not everybody wants to give Middlebury money, that's fine," he added. "But there are people who do want to give, and we found that they will give very significant levels."

Courcey also pointed out that the fundraising team is working closely with the finance team to ensure Middlebury is financially sound.

"There's a point when the cash flow from this campaign keeps getting bigger and bigger and that intersects with the actual cost of Middlebury," he suggested. "There's an interjection probably by 2027 and 2028, where things get much, much better for this college relative to finance."

Meanwhile, the Board of Trustees directed senior leadership to bring forth plans to achieve a balanced budget for the upcoming 2026 and 2027 fiscal years.

"The Board is very focused right now on how we can operate within our budget in a given year, and we're working on that plan. We need to present [it] to them in May," Provost said.

AFC REVOKES AFTER-HOURS ACCESS AFTER WAVE OF THEFTS, DAMAGES

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damaged in places after less than five months of student access, and now... theft of common space items? Is this our community? (Cue the side-eye). And during Black History Month..." the post read.

Assistant Director of the AFC Steve Zatarain '15 stated that the goal of the restricted access is not just to punish, but it is also an opportunity to reset and reassess the way the space is used and valued.

"We've given some opportunities in the past to do that meditation without any changes in service hours... and we did not see a change in our show. So I think that's how we ended up here," he said.

Damages to the AFC have been accumulating for years, but missing yellow lounge pillows, the destruction of the kitchen and the irreversible damage to salon countertops have marked a sharp uptick in violations recently. The situation reached its peak when a scalding pot burned through the kitchen table, rendering it unusable and prompting the AFC to announce on Feb. 21 that they would revoke after-hours card access.

"No, there will not be exceptions. No, there won't be any special list of students. No, this is not for the semester. The privilege is revoked completely and permanently," the post reads. Carr Hall, where the AFC has lived since its creation in 2015, will now be locked starting at 4:30 p.m.

The Instagram post cited multiple reasons for the decision, including the numerous thefts, the destruction of plants, damage to the microwave's heating element and windows being left open in freezing winter temperatures. The message was clear — efforts to maintain an open and accessible space had been met with continuous disrespect, leaving the AFC with no choice but to impose strict limitations.

In the post, the AFC also announced plans to implement a process requiring organizers of student-run events and meetings to submit pictures of the space before and after their use. If event organizers do not comply with this process, their group will be barred from using the space in the future.

Tamari Kuzanashvili '27, another AFC fellow, reflected on the situation, acknowledging the disappointment but also the necessity of the decision.

"It's not just the pillows, but it's more of if you don't respect the space, then we'll have to protect it somehow. Closing AFC down for at least a semester is sort of a measure to do that," she said in an interview with The Campus.

While some have suggested surveillance measures such as ID tracking or security cameras, Kuzanashvili remains skeptical.

"I wouldn't want AFC to become a place where you have to be policed all the time. Whether or not you're being actually policed doesn't matter, because it already takes away so much content from the space by implementing those measures," she said.

Instead, she hopes that this moment will serve as a wake-up call for the Middlebury community to reflect on the role of shared spaces and how to better respect them.

As an alumnus, the AFC's assistant director Zatarain believes in the value of spaces like the AFC, noting that such a resource was not available when he was a student.

"The AFC is special because it provides a dedicated space for students who often feel like they don't have one on this campus," Zatarain said in an interview with The Campus. "That's why it's so painful to see it being disrespected."

Many students who rely on the AFC are grappling with the implications of these restrictions in their daily lives, whose frustrations Basnet discussed with The Campus.

"This campus has shown us there are really no safe spaces on campus. And the fact that other students are trying to take away the one space that we do have is just once again very telling of how people treat us," she said.

For those affected, the sense of loss is profound, not just in terms of material damage but in the erosion of trust for students who find comfort in the AFC's inclusive space. Students have begun discussing potential solutions, ranging from hiring a front desk monitor to implementing stricter sign-in policies. However, AFC staff noted that ID tracking has been met with resistance from Public Safety due to security concerns, leaving the community searching for alternative ways to rebuild respect and accountability.

The AFC's situation serves as a stark reminder of what is at stake when shared spaces are not respected. The Anderson Freeman Center was built to be a haven for students who often find themselves without one, but its current message is clear.

"We tried... You did not. A sad day," the Feb. 21 Instagram post reads.

ADMINISTRATION PLANS TO CRACK DOWN ON STUDENT PARKING VIOLATIONS

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Facilities Services is unable to plow there, which makes it more difficult for faculty members to park during the day.

Whitney isn't the only person on campus who has considered the issue of parking policy violations. At the recent faculty meeting in February, professors discussed their frustrations over students occupying their designated, limited parking spaces.

Faculty Council President Jason Mittell announced at the meeting that Public Safety is in the process of modifying requirements surrounding parking fines.

"First thing, they are working with administrators to get the parking violation's lines included on the student bill, and to implement a requirement that students cannot register for classes or graduate until their fines are resolved," Mittell explained.

This updated strategy for fines, which has yet to go into effect, is not Public Safety's only method of incentivizing parking policy compliance. Parking tickets, warnings, vehicle immobilizations and additional signage emphasizing faculty designated spots all encourage drivers to follow the college's parking rules.

"Since October first, [Public Safety] has issued more than 2,000 parking tickets and 1,300 warnings. Over 50 vehicles have been immobilized or booted, and 50 students have had their parking privileges revoked and have been referred to the community standards office for disciplinary follow-ups," Mittell said. "There have also been hundreds of phone calls and emails sent to students who have parked in [an] area that is not authorized."

Associate Professor of History Maggie Clinton shared her personal frustration with the students abusing faculty parking spaces, relating the issue to a recent trend where professors and staff are obligated to do more work for diminishing returns.

"Apart from student entitlement, the parking issue is part of the overall deterioration of faculty and staff working conditions. The extra time we spend looking for parking and walking to our classrooms/offices is time that's not reflected in our salaries. For years now, we've been asked to give five minutes here, five minutes there, to tasks that used to be addressed by other employees but now fall to us," Clinton wrote in an email to The Campus. "It adds up."

While parking tickets and warnings can be written for a variety of policy violations, one issue that has received particular attention this year is the winter parking ban. The ban stipulates, among other rules, that neither students nor faculty and staff can park in the main lots between midnight and 5 p.m. Having clear lots during these hours ensures snow is removed effectively and promptly, which has been especially important following this year's significant snow accumulations.

Drivers that do not comply with the ban will be towed without prior notice; Public Safety issues $150 fines for the first tow and $175 fines for all subsequent offenses.

One exception to the winter parking ban applies to students who hold medical parking permits. These passes offer tailored parking accommodations to students who have medical needs, which allow them to park in spots not normally designated for students but that are near their classes or campus residence.

While these permits are necessary for some, they have provided their own set of challenges for the administration. Mittell shared that Public Safety has met with the Disability Resource Center to clarify these accessibility policies.

An administrator at the meeting added that accommodation passes do not currently allow students to park in faculty and staff spots. They shared that the Center for Health and Wellness has taken over the process of issuing parking permits that comply with the American Disabilities Act (ADA) this semester to allow medical professionals to determine who needs accessible passes and for how long.

"We are also cutting down the duration of those disability passes," the administrator said. "A student might have a boot for three weeks, but they were getting a pass for the entire semester... so we are no longer doing that. We're understanding what are some of the needs of our students and working with them."

Alison Finch, director of Health Services at Middlebury, described the process of evaluating medically required permits and renewing them this year.

"Permits are currently issued to be clinically tailored to the needs of the student, based either on the assessment of the student in person with a Center for Health and Wellness clinician, or based on documentation from a member of the student's care team in the community. If a student continues to need a permit after the initial expiration date, we will reassess their needs and extend the permit," Finch wrote in an email to The Campus.

There has been no formal change in policy as regards to temporary medical parking permits, though the Center for Health and Wellness said it remains committed to assisting students with mobility challenges in the midst of weather complications.

"We have been having continued conversations with campus partners about how to best support students who are experiencing mobility challenges," Finch wrote.

Clinton emphasized how the parking situation has continued to be a constant source of irritation for virtually all faculty members at the college, herself included.

"A friend joked that irritation about the parking situation may be the one issue that unites the entire faculty," she wrote. "She's probably right!"

Editor's Note: Editor in Chief Ryan McElroy '25 and Managing Editor Madeleine Kaptein '25.5 contributed reporting to this article. Faculty Council President Jason Mittell is the faculty advisor for The Middlebury Campus. He had no role in the publication of this article.

Otter Creek Used Books takes an old-fashioned approach to bookselling

By ANNA XIE
Contributing Writer

Nestled in Middlebury's Marble Works District, Otter Creek Used Books prioritizes the old-fashioned, brick-and-mortar shopping experience.

The bookstore receives book donations from all over Vermont, with donors driving from as far away as Burlington to drop books off in Middlebury. After each donation, store owner Barbara Harding checks each book for damage, cleans the covers and finds a space on the shelves. The bookstore's categories are constantly changing.

"It kind of just evolves," Harding said. "When we set it up, when we moved in here, it all just fell into place where it should be. There are some sections that kind of come and go."

Harding, a lifelong Middlebury resident, is the fourth owner of the bookstore. Formerly a travel and marketing director at the Addison County Chamber of Commerce, Harding has always loved shopping at used bookstores. She was visiting Otter Creek Used Books in 2006 when she noticed a "for sale" sign outside the door.

"I went down the stairs and I asked [the owner] how much he was selling it for. I went back to my desk, and I called my husband and said, 'We're buying a used bookstore,'" Harding recalled. "When I first bought the store, my husband and daughter were with me, and we got the key and they were like, 'These are our books!'" Harding said.

A year later, she left her job at the Chamber of Commerce to run the bookstore full time. Harding relies on her intuition to run the bookstore with no prior experience.

"It's just listening to myself and trusting and knowing what I like, but then trying to expand it to make sure that it's more inclusive for everyone, not just my interests," Harding said.

Sofi Gribovski '27 told The Campus she likes the philosophy section in particular.

"I love the vibe and the smell of old books, and the people that work at the store are so sweet," she said.

Myrah Valmyr '27 agreed with her assessment.

"Otter Creek reminds me of how much I love exploring new topics and ideas, which is more or less what college is about," she said. "I always gravitate towards a different corner stacked with books I wouldn't come into contact with at any other bookseller."

In 2011, Harding moved the bookstore from Main Street to its current location in Marble Works due to construction on the town's train tracks. The Marble Works space was formerly an art gallery, but when Harding was looking for a new location, she found out the gallery owner was not planning on renewing her lease.

"It was like perfect. It just seemed like this is exactly where the bookstore should be," Harding said.

The bookstore is arranged with a main room of shelves, along with additional themed rooms for children and specific genres. Sometimes, local artists display works in the bookstores that are available for purchase.

ANNA XIE / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Otter Creek Bookstore in Marble Works prioritzes the in-person shopping experience.

"I wanted it to be cozy," Harding said.

Valmyr described her experience of leisurely browsing in Otter Creek Used Books.

"The way the sun comes through the window and the perfectly placed chair right by the religion and philosophy section is enough to keep me in there for longer than I ought to be," she said.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Harding began posting a few books for sale online every day. Customers quickly took interest, purchasing books and gift certificates, which she left in the front of the store for them to pick up easily. Today, the bookstore maintains a small presence on AbeBooks, an online bookstore, but focuses on the in-person shopping experience.

Besides the necessary adjustments made in 2020, Harding has aimed to establish a unique identity for her bookstore, one that resisted the shift to online sales.

"Everybody sells online," Harding said. "So I wanted to be like an old fashioned used bookstore, and I used the model of Book Row in New York City. You didn't know what was in the store unless you walked in."

Harding also remains closely connected with other used bookstore owners through the Vermont Antiquarian Booksellers Association (VAB), where she currently serves as president. The group allows booksellers to find specific books for their customers and trade with each other.

For Harding, the joy of running Otter Creek Used Books comes from being surrounded by books.

"The best part is just being with the books," Harding said. "I still get really excited when new books, new to the store, come in and just [seeing] what's in the box, what's in the bag."

"A Whole Latte Fun!": Latte artists throw down at Little Seed to support Middlebury Skatepark Project

By LILY JENSEN
Contributing Writer

Little Seed Coffee Roasters hosted a tournament style Latte Art Throwdown on Feb. 28 to raise money, in tandem with other local businesses, for the Middlebury Skatepark Project.

A celebration of small town charm, the throwdown featured both impressive and unexpected milk foam art ranging from a seahorse to a human face. The atmosphere was vibrant with a well-caffeinated, standing audience. Given Little Seed's commitment to sustainability, every latte carefully crafted for the competition was given to the audience members and participants, despite the late hour.

Daniel Gutierrez, owner and roaster at Iluminar Coffee and a former Middlebury student, served as a judge of the competition, the fourth latte art showcase he has judged. Gutierrez told The Campus that when he lived in Jacksonville, Florida, he competed every month in various latte art competitions of varying sizes.

"I think there might be eight competitors tonight. I've been to latte art competitions that are just four people and I've also been to competitions with 128 people," Gutierrez said.

A Latte Art Throwdown is structured similarly to many other competitions and sports.

"It is a head-to-head competition that's bracket style," Gutierrez said. "Two competitors go up against each other. They steam milk, and then they go ahead and pour their design into the cup. After they pour the design into the cup, a really important part of the process is being able to then carry the cup and place it down on the counter...whoever wins that goes to the next round and then it continues that head-to-head style."

To avoid bias, the judges look away while the competitors pour their designs, ensuring they do not know which latte belongs to which competitor. Once the three judges turn around, they take a few minutes to observe, formulate an opinion and then point to the latte they think should win.

The judging criteria includes several factors including how much the milk contrasts with the espresso, symmetry, cleanliness, complexity and difficulty of the design attempted, and the surface tension.

Little Seed Coffee Roasters previously hosted a latte art throwdown in 2022, a year after the café was first opened by Maggie Keith and Anthony Gerakos, partners and business co-owners. Maggie said that the event came back this year because of passionate Little Seed team members who got excited to bring it back.

"It's a good opportunity to have interaction between people in the community and students. And then also at Little Seed we take pride in our latte art. So I think it's cool to be able to kind of showcase that," said Henry Chambers '27, one of the staff members who competed.

Alex Milley '25, an employee at Little Seed who has worked there since it opened, won the throwdown despite his round one elimination in the 2022 competition. He won an electric pour-over coffee kettle and a bronze milk frothing pitcher trophy.

"I think I've done better when I'm not nervous," Milley said. "The nerves definitely play a role. Just breathe a little bit. I don't know. You don't really get to deal with it. You just pour, go back to the basics."

Little Seed collaborated with local businesses for the throwdown, providing local Drop In Brewery Beers as concession. They were supported by Sparrow Art Supply, the Middlebury Inn and others to provide enticing prizes for the different raffle packages.

All funds went to the Middlebury Skatepark project as a fundraiser to support their mission. Former Little Seed employee and Middlebury Skatepark Project Board Member Kristen Carra was the brains behind the collaboration.

"We talked a lot about wouldn't it be cool if one day we did a little event for this? And the Latte Art throwdown we did a few years ago was so successful we thought, hey, this would be a nice little spring treat to bring to the community," Carra explained.

Jill Quakenbush, treasurer of the Middlebury Skatepark Project and roller skater herself, was also instrumental in helping this event come to life.

"It's to provide an alternative recreation option, in particular for adolescents and teens and kids... And so we're trying to provide a safe, purpose built place to practice wheel sports," Quakenbush said on the importance of the Middlebury Skatepark Project.

LILY JENSEN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Competitors at the Little Seed's Latte Art Throw Down were judged by the color, symmetry, cleanliness and complexity of their latte art designs.

The mission of the Middlebury Skatepark Project is to build a 7,500 square foot concrete skate park in Recreation Park near the swimming pool. Right now, they are working on fundraising to break ground on this vision, replacing the temporary mini ramp holding its place.

"My collective friends were very much my skatepark homies... It was a nice place to go as a teenager where I felt like I could be with my friends. It was safe, it was fun. We were active and we just were kind of hanging out and making really great friendships," Carra said.

Events like the Latte Art Throwdown are examples of classic, eccentric small town fun with an essential purpose for the community.

"Vance Skis in Jeans": Vermonters rally against JD Vance's vacation to Sugarbush

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their planned demonstration in Waitsfield.

On Feb. 27, The Pitcher Inn owner George Dosey wrote in a letter to the editor to The Reporter that he had been informed that Vice President Vance had changed his lodging plans and would be staying elsewhere. His statement also responded to the floods of anonymous comments criticizing his decision to accommodate Vance.

"Our decision to welcome the Vance family to The Pitcher Inn was never in question – he is the duly elected Vice President of the United States," Dosey wrote in his letter.

Dosey also acknowledged the planned protests near his inn, stating that his team would serve free coffee outside the Warren Store on Saturday for participants.

Tisa Rennau, one of the leaders of Indivisible Mad River Valley's protest in Waitsfield, told The Campus that the turnout of approximately 1,000–1,500 protestors far exceeded organizers' expectations, especially in a town with a population of less than 2,000.

Indivisible National and other Vermont-based Indivisible groups came to support and guide Indivisible Mad River Valley in their efforts, in addition to the 50501, a national political action movement against Trump's policies. Indivisible National advised the organizers to choose a central location like Waitsfield to maximize participation.

"The point was not necessarily that we expected [Vance] to see our protests, it was more important to have the protest," Rennau said.

Rennau also shared her reasons for organizing and protesting in an interview with The Campus.

"Personally, I felt that it was pretty insensitive for him to be recreating in the Valley while people across this country are indiscriminately being fired, losing their jobs and losing their healthcare," Rennau said. "It was originally a protest against the policies of this administration...but him coming to the valley and actually being in our community that values all the natural resources that we have, it is just so upsetting."

Rennau also criticized the likely high cost of the U.S. Secret Service and other security in place for Vance and his family on his trip. She added that she believes J.D. Vance's humiliation of Ukrainian President Zelensky in the Oval Office on Friday, Feb. 28 contributed to the urgency of the protests.

Some protestors believed that Sugarbush should not have allowed Vance to ski on its slopes due to his administration's policies. A Sugarbush employee who wished to remain anonymous due to fear of retaliation told The Campus that they had preemptively informed their boss of their unwillingness to work on Saturday and Sunday while Vance was skiing. The employee believes that the resort should have shut down operations for the weekend instead of welcoming the vice president to its slopes.

"Sugarbush is all public land and this administration has made it clear that they plan on selling off a lot of our public land, and so it feels a little silly to welcome him to our resort when his administration is the antithesis of all of that," the employee said. "It feels contradictory on so many levels."

The employee mentioned having encouraged their co-workers to also call out of work.

"As effective as protests are — and I definitely support them and plan to participate in them — I think a stronger message to send would be the resort not operating. Workers have more power in the situation than they think they do, but I recognize that it's not a simple or easy decision to make, especially when your job could be on the line," they said.

A GoFundMe supporting Sugarbush employees who planned to walk out of work over the weekend raised $11,981, surpassing its goal of $10,000. The funds are intended to compensate these employees who missed a day's worth of wages in protest of the resort's decision to let Vance ski.

A Middlebury student who skied at Sugarbush on Saturday said the lifts operated normally, but they spotted several U.S Secret Service agents skiing on the mountain, identifiable by their ear pieces. They said many skiers sported accessories either in support of or against Vance; MAGA messages taped on ski helmets, pride flags attached to jackets and cardboard fastened to ski poles touting memes mocking the vice president were ubiquitous on the slopes.

The student drove straight from Middlebury to Sugarbush and did not pass through Waitsfield, missing most of the anti-Vance protests. Instead, they saw mainly pro-Trump and Vance groups, including a MAGA caravan when passing through the Mad River Valley.

Meanwhile, in Waitsfield, protestors carried signs condemning Vance for his verbal attacks on Zelensky and the Trump administration's policies. Messages included: "Vance is a traitor, go ski in Russia," "Hate does not grow in the rocky soil of Vermont," "Take your hate out of our state," "Spineless fascists can't ski" and "Vance skis in jeans," among others.

Since taking office, the Trump administration has openly mocked and reversed efforts to combat climate change through sweeping executive orders issued at an unprecedented speed. Experts warn that these actions could have long-lasting and irreversible effects on the planet. Addiotionally, the administration has fired approximately 2,000 employees from the U.S Forest Service and cut 1,000 jobs from the National Park Service, leaving public lands — such as the Green Mountain National Forest where Sugarbush Resort resides — especially vulnerable to climate change. On Saturday, Trump ordered federal agencies to explore ways to bypass regulations on timber production in national forests and other public lands.

Vermont, known for its deep commitment to environmental conservation and open access to nature, boasts 1.5 million acres of conserved land. The state's environmentally conscious residents overwhelmingly supported Kamala Harris in the presidential election, awarding her 64.4% of its popular vote and helping her secure her first three electoral votes in November.

While Indivisible's protest was the largest, VTDigger reported that additional demonstrations took place in Warren, where protestors from the Vermont Coalition for Palestinian Liberation, Cooperation Vermont and the Party for Socialism and Liberation held pro-Palestinian flags to show Palestinian solidarity, demanding that Trump's administration stop funding to the Isreali government. Pro-Trump and Vance signs and MAGA flags were also seen in Warren.

Some Sugarbush employees found ways to protest while on the job. Snow reporter Lucy Welch, who has been writing the resort's daily snow conditions report to skiers since 2023, used Saturday's update to deliver an over 800-word message commenting on Vance's visit. The report was taken down, but has since been widely circulated on social media and news outlets.

"Sugarbush operates on 1745 acres of the Green Mountain National Forest. Right now,

COURTESY PHOTO

Many of the protestors objecting to Vance's visit to Sugarbush held signs mocking his ski skills.

National Forest lands and National Parks are under direct attack by the current Administration, who is swiftly terminating the positions of dedicated employees who devote their lives to protecting the land we love, and to protecting us while we are enjoying that land," Welch wrote in her report.

She went on to address Trump and Vance's neglect of climate change — a major threat to the ski industry. She also highlighted the diverse groups of people that Sugarbush attracts, from LGBTQ+ community members, veterans, and non-U.S. citizen employees that are directly being targeted by the current administration.

Despite her criticism of Vance's visit, Welch acknowledged the challenges Sugarbush's management would have faced in attempting to bar the vice president and Secret Service from skiing their slopes. She urged her readers to direct their anger toward the Trump administration rather than the resort itself.

"I want to have kids one day, and I want to teach them to ski. The policies and ideals of the current Administration, however, are not conducive to either of these things, because, at least how things look now, I'd never be able to afford a good life for a child anyway, and snow will be a thing of Vermont history," she wrote.

Maeve Nolan '25 skied at Sugarbush on Friday to avoid the anticipated weekend commotion. While on the slopes, fellow skiers at the resort approached her and her friends, handing them stacks of stickers with the messages "JD Vance wishes he could ski like a childless cat lady" and "JD Vance shreds the bunny slope and American jobs." The exchange sparked a conversation among skiers, reflecting similar sentiments surrounding Vance's visit.

"I don't think either of us were talking about how it was Sugarbush's fault or anything, but just talking about how we really didn't understand why the Vice President would come to a place where he likely knew that he would face a lot of backlash," Nolan said.

In a press release on Feb. 27, Vermont Gov. Phil Scott responded to Vance's plans to visit the state.

"I hope Vermonters remember the Vice President is here on a family trip with his young children and, while we may not always agree, we should be respectful," the statement reads.

Protesters in South Burlington gathered near the airport ahead of Vance's departure for a "farewell sendoff." While it is unclear whether the vice president will want to return to Vermont anytime soon, one thing is clear: His visit sparked a powerful and widespread response from the community.

TECHNO TAKES OVER: PROFESSOR PRAKASH TO DJ MIDLEBURY'S FIRST RAVE AT TOWN HALL THEATER

By ARIELLA FROMMER
Contributing Writer

The Town Hall Theater will host the first Middlebury Rave on Friday, March 7 from 8 p.m. to midnight, featuring global music, visual projections, dancing and a bar. The event aims to create an immersive, high-energy experience for attendees, blending electronic music with a dynamic visual atmosphere.

The DJ for the event, Amit Prakash, visiting assistant professor of International and Global Studies at the college, told The Campus he developed his passion for DJing during his undergraduate years.

"My friend had turntables, and we went to raves," Prakash said. "Then we started realizing that we really love the music and so we started collecting records."

Prakash began DJing for parties as well as for his show for his college's radio station. After college, he DJed a little for local clubs and bars in Washington D.C.

"And then I went to graduate school and became a historian and put them away for 20 years," Prakash said.

It wasn't until the Covid-19 pandemic that he rediscovered his passion, prompted by his son's newfound interest in techno music.

"We pulled out the turntables and have been doing it for fun," Prakash said.

The idea for the event began in the summer of 2024, when Assistant Professor of Dance Laurel Jenkins organized a rave for graduate students at Bread Loaf. Among the attendees was Lisa Mitchell, executive and artistic director of Town Hall Theater, who expressed her interest in bringing a similar rave to the town.

Since then, Jenkins, Mitchell and Prakash have collaborated to bring the event to life. The Town Hall Theater serves as a hub for hosting town halls, concerts, and other events. Recently, it has opened a newly constructed building adjacent to the theater, featuring classrooms and design shops. According to Prakash, Mitchell had the idea to celebrate the new space with a dance party.

Prakash is excited for people to hear music that is not found on mainstream radio.

"The focus should not be on the DJ. I am just a medium for conveying music that I think is cool," he said.

Raves originated as underground dance parties, spaces where people could come together to experience music outside of commercial constraints. However, over time, the rave scene has evolved, becoming more widely known in the mainstream.

"Now, people understand 'rave' to mean electronic music and dancing," Prakash said. "What I like [about raves] is that people can just move how they want to move with the music."

The organizers expect the attendees to be a mix of Middlebury students and local community members, hoping that the event can make Middlebury students who do not already know about the Town Hall Theater aware of its presence.

The DJ performance will be accompanied by a videographer, who will project visuals on the wall, dynamically reacting to the music Prakash plays. In preparation for this event, Prakash has been ensuring that all components of his setup function properly. He has tested the location of the DJ booth, carefully selected what records to bring, and checked the speakers and subwoofers, which are especially important given the bass-heavy music.

Prakash said he is aiming to create a musical arc over the four-hour party.

"I have a plan and then I usually jettison that plan pretty quickly depending on the crowd, depending on how I'm feeling, and the intangible vibe," he said. "I consider DJing like producing a mood, effectively, but it's not just me imposing it – it's also feeding off what's going on out on the dance floor."

HOW MIDDLEBURY SHOULD RESPOND TO TRUMP'S ATTACK ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

While the long-term impacts of the Trump Administration's recent executive orders regarding immigration and budget cuts are yet to be fully realized, it is clear that this administration intends to target universities and vulnerable populations within them. The Trump administration's policies have had a disproportionate effect on certain groups at our school, such as international students concerned about looming deportations. STEM students may be feeling pressure from cuts to research funding that would stymie their professor's projects in BiHall, while graduating seniors have reported career shifts in light of cuts to the federal government and targeted industry.

We call for sustained political engagement among the student body; this does not have to resurrect the "Resistance" movement of 2017, but disconnecting from politics and the very real effects the new administration will have on Middlebury is not an option. Students may only spend four years here, but we are all invested — or should be invested — in the continued growth and future of Middlebury College as a center of learning and optimism.

Our bubble is fragile, after all; one poorly worded letter from Old Chapel or provocative incident among the student body could attract unwanted national scrutiny to the college. We should not be afraid to have difficult conversations or to address controversial subjects, and for the good of the college, and for the good of the institution we leave to future Middlebury students, we all should be aware of the attacks on higher education and the unfortunate new outlook for many vulnerable groups on our campus.

The college also has a responsibility to be forthright with the students about its approach to the Trump administration. We acknowledge communication from the college, such as emails regarding political events, are often impersonal and otherwise unproductive. However, the question of whether or not Middlebury is implicated in wider national trends, and understanding how our students will be affected by these developments are essential to our student body.

Since Middlebury regards itself as a forum for political debate and free speech, the college should be able to communicate openly about how the Trump administration is affecting its students, as well as how it might impact the future of Middlebury regarding the diversity of its student body, federal funding for financial aid and grants, and its course offerings. Tell us the truth, no matter how ugly our new reality may be.

Higher education has been under considerable criticism for the past few years, especially regarding free speech on campuses, research priorities, affirmative action and other Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) efforts. Despite what is often described as the "Middlebury bubble," our institution is not immune to the effects of the outside world, nor to its criticism.

If Middlebury can be put under fire for its values and belief in free speech, the college should be able to respond to its critics. Let's pick our battles wisely: to defend the most endangered affected members of our community without ceding ground on our values does not require us to engage in every fight or join every lawsuit against the federal government. For our own security and the college's well-being, we should work to preserve Middlebury as we know it.

Most of us do care about what happens to our school and the status of its national reputation, whether that value lies in the recognizable name on our resumes, sentimental nostalgia for our time here or the experiences of future students who will follow in our footsteps. The uncertainty of this moment also requires us as a student body to consider the value of our education, and what makes a liberal arts education worthwhile.

Despite what the Trump administration might consider superfluous or unnecessary curriculum, Middlebury prides itself on requiring students to approach core educational ideas from many different perspectives. If Middlebury prides itself on these values, we must be able to defend them and be willing to engage in civil discourse about why our different departments each hold value.

As Middlebury approaches the next four years with a new president of our own, Ian Baucom, we must consider the impact Trump's administration will have on Middlebury. If only for alumni relying on the name-recognition Middlebury provides, or, perhaps more importantly, for the classes of 2029 and 2029.5 that will be opening their acceptance letters this month, Middlebury students should be aware of the effects this administration brings and the institution itself should be transparent about the realities of the situation with the student body.

The stakes have never been higher for colleges and universities across the country: once held in bipartisan esteem, higher education is now politicized and under an existential threat in terms of funding, safety and intellectual freedom. We must recommit ourselves to the principles of free inquiry, vigorous debate and mutual respect that define our institution's academic and social culture. It is times like these when an institution such as Middlebury defines itself.

REFLECTING ON MY TIME AT MIDDLEBURY AFTER THREE YEARS OF WAR IN UKRAINE

Op-Ed

Gregory Marcinik *is a member of the class of 2025.*

COURTESY PHOTO / BALFOUR STUDIOS

The recent United for Ukraine 2025 event was the fourth iteration of the performance highlighting Ukrainian culture and music.

On Feb. 24, 2022, eight years after the annexation of the Crimean peninsula, Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. What was supposed to be a three-day special military operation has now officially gone on for over three years. Despite pessimist predictions, Ukraine was able to fight back the invasion and regain much of its lost territory.

Yet, for many Ukrainian students at Middlebury, the war has remained a constant part of everyday life. For myself, it has become synonymous with my time at Middlebury. The invasion began just a few weeks after I first arrived on campus as a Feb and is still happening as I write this in my senior year. I had anticipated the conflict in those weeks before the initial invasion, ever since Vladimir Putin first began amassing soldiers on the Ukrainian border, but its sudden start was still shocking. It was 10 p.m. when a friend from my hometown in New York texted me the news. I was soon on the phone with my Ukrainian grandparents, calling to find out if they were safe, even if such assurances of safety are now indeterminable for Ukrainians.

Other Ukrainians on campus with whom I have spoken with had similar experiences.

"I felt like the world was falling apart, everything froze. But I mainly felt numb, which is how I often feel today as a reaction to any bad news from Ukraine," Kseniia Lebid '26 said.

"I saw [Putin's] speech and the news coming out, and it was like a nightmare," added another student, Sofiia Tretiak '27.

The war alienated Ukrainian students at Middlebury from their peers. Any conversation about the war is personal for us. "It's much more difficult to talk about Ukraine. I get offended and angry so easily while people can walk away without realizing the effect of their words on me," Lebid said.

"Right now, you always have the war on your mind," Anastasiia Demchenko '28 said. "Sometimes it's difficult for me to talk with other students about some everyday things just because at moments I realize how different is where we stand in life right now," Lebid added.

The threat of a missile striking the home of a loved one is still a constant reality for Ukrainian students at Middlebury.

Through my time in college, reading the news and hearing of the horrific events of the war, I have learned that the threat of Putin's Russia is not one that can be defeated through concessions. One of the Russian government's main goals is to eliminate Ukrainian cultural identity, which has been demonstrated through massacres in places such as Bucha and Mariupol, the abduction of Ukrainian children and countless other atrocities. Despite the Russian government's attacks on Ukrainian culture, at Middlebury, Ukrainian students have used their voices to educate the world about their traditions.

Since its inception in April 2022, Ukrainian students have organized the United for Ukraine show at Middlebury. The show included among other things, performances from the New York Crimean Tatar Ensemble, traditional Bandurist musicians, student choreographed dances and a variety of poetry readings, songs and theatrical performances. Through this show, people within and outside the college community learned of the beauty of Ukrainian cultural traditions. In addition to the annual spring show, Middlebury students hosted traditional culinary workshops and danced in the International Student Organization (ISO) show.

While away from home, culture has become the strength for Ukrainian students. It is a way of garnering support for our country while we remain thousands of miles away from the front lines.

"I feel a lot of responsibility about everything I do. I want people to know that we [Ukrainians] are not just the war... I always have to be educating, doing something because I am so privileged to be here," Tretiak stated.

Indeed, the best way for us Ukrainian students to help our country would be through the education of others. Through education, we can garner support for our people and country.

As the current United States administration does its best to dismantle Ukrainian territorial sovereignty through concessions to a predatory Russian government, we must remember that Ukraine has remained defiant. Despite current events such as the United States president's tantrum in the Oval Office and its vote to side with Russia at a recent United Nations meeting, Ukraine's soldiers continue to push back the Russian invasion. There is still hope for the Ukrainian people.

My time at Middlebury has been largely defined by this war. It has stayed with me through all my assignments, tests and essays. As calls for a ceasefire become louder, the end seems to appear to draw near. The reality is that only a Russian defeat can end the war. Russian expansionism is not limited to Ukraine. It involves every country. As Ukrainian students we understand Russia's threat better than anyone and will continue to support Ukraine through everything we do.

Slava Ukraini.

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Middlebury divestment campaigns are a marathon, not a sprint

Op-Ed

Steve Early *is a member of the class of 1971 and an author, union organizer and labor journalist.* ***Greg Dennis*** *is a member of the class of 1974 and has written about environmental issues for over 50 years.*

Last spring, with the support of concerned alumni like us, Middlebury students made their fourth major attempt since 1970 to persuade the college that its institutional investing should reflect concerns about issues such as peace, human rights, environmental justice and corporate social responsibility.

Unsurprisingly, Middlebury's Board of Trustees did not agree. We were glad to see, however, that proponents of divestment related to the ongoing war in Gaza resolved to continue their fight because, as one organizer said, "We are in it for the long run."

That long-term perspective is exactly what's needed. Campaigning for institutional shareholder activism in U.S. higher education has always been a multi-generational marathon or relay race — never a one-year sprint. While divestment campaigns at Middlebury and other colleges have varied in focus, they have all been driven by ethical and moral concerns: to slow climate change, address racism or curb corporate malfeasance.

We can speak from personal experience about these efforts because of our past involvement in organizing movements related to the college's investments. Over the past 50 years, a common denominator of these recurring efforts has been initial resistance from Middlebury trustees.

If divestment opponents think this rebuff of reasonable student, faculty and alumni demands will deter future controversies, they are mistaken. The last five decades of divestment debates at Middlebury have inspired much lifelong activism and political engagement. Veterans of past campus campaigns are still questioning and challenging companies whose pursuit of enormous profits endangers workers, consumers, the environment and military conflict resolution.

In 1970–71, we helped rally student and faculty support for a pioneering attempt to make General Motors — then the nation's largest corporation — more socially responsible. As consumer advocate Ralph Nader recently recalled, this "Campaign GM" had three common-sense goals: "get GM to produce safer cars, less polluting cars, and more fuel-efficient cars."

Institutional investors such as Middlebury were also asked to vote in favor of expanding the auto maker's board to include representatives of the public. Felix Rohatyn '49, a nationally known investment banker and governor of the New York Stock Exchange, led the Board of Trustees in opposition to this idea.

As reported by The Campus in 1972, Rohatyn ridiculed the idea that reform-oriented proxy contests and shareholder activism at annual meetings could ever be effective.

In a debate with students about Campaign GM, he argued that investors with a conscience should find firms that were already "good corporate citizens" and buy their so-called "clean stocks." He did not consider Middlebury to be among those conscientious investors.

While this Nader initiative did not succeed, colleges and universities, religious organizations, and public employee pension funds faced growing pressure to rid their portfolios of stocks that made them complicit with government or corporate misbehavior, at home and abroad.

For example, in the mid-1980s, Middlebury was one of 155 educational institutions urged to divest from companies with holdings in South Africa. After protest encampments sprung up around the country, the college joined many other colleges and universities in doing so. This and other forms of pressure helped South Africa's Black majority finally end the violent, racist and oppressive system of white minority rule known as apartheid.

With these precedents in mind, the environmental group 350.org — born at Middlebury in 2008 — became part of another on-going divestment effort aimed at fossil fuel companies. Since then, foes of "Big Oil" have raised substantial public awareness of the industry's negative impact on the environment and the related dangers of climate change and greenhouse gas pollution. Left unchecked, fossil fuel use will destabilize world civilization within the lifetimes of today's college students.

A student-led fossil fuel divestment campaign by the Sunday Night Environmental Group (SNEG) and Divest Middlebury — with support from alums, 350.org and 350Vermont — was initially met with strong resistance from the administration and trustees. In 2013, the trustees rejected their divestment proposal.

But with leadership from then-President Laurie Patton and a new push by students, the trustees reversed their decision. In early 2019, as part of Energy 2028, the board unanimously voted to divest from virtually all fossil fuels.

This ongoing 15-year process affected $55 million worth of corporate stock holdings, in an endowment of nearly $1.6 billion as of last June. Globally, the wildly successful international divestment campaign has been embraced, in some form, by 1,600 entities with assets totaling over $40 trillion.

When the banner of divestment was raised again last spring, by students protesting the U.S.-backed war in Gaza, their demands quickly gained the backing of a Student Government Association (SGA) referendum and alumni support, via an online petition that we and over 1000 other former students signed. Middlebury's anti-war encampment eventually disbanded, in exemplary fashion, with an agreement that set the stage for follow-up discussions between students and trustees last summer and fall.

Yet those talks deadlocked this fall over the feasibility and desirability of severing Middlebury's financial ties to military contractors aiding a continuing war in the Middle East. "The college announced that it would not be taking any actions towards divestment from war profiteering, claiming it only maintains minimal investments in companies suggested for a review," The Campus reported.

Since President Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20, threats to our political democracy have become very real in Washington, D.C. It's a good time to remember what kind of organizing work, over the long haul, will be necessary to counter the greatly expanded influence of big money in politics and policymaking.

Corporate misconduct, which adversely affects millions of Americans, will increase, not decline, as federal agencies designed to protect citizens from harm are hobbled or dismantled by the Trump administration.

Americans opposed to this deregulatory agenda will not just be a mounting court challenges and grassroots protests directed at those currently running the federal government. If they have a campus, community, labor or religious organization connection to institutional investing, they are busy scrutinizing portfolios to identify firms and entire industries receiving the green light to engage in socially irresponsible behavior, with fewer legal constraints than before.

So look for more, not less, campaigning for socially responsible investing as one of many ways that we can make our voices heard in the Trump era.

COURTESY PHOTOS / MIDDLEBURY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Student strikers holding a peace sign and American flag at a March 1970 protest against the Vietnam War. Both of the authors helped campaign against the war during their time at Middlebury.

COURTESY PHOTO / GREG DENNIS

Middlebury students and community members protested outside of Old Chapel on Jan. 25, 2019 in favor of divestment from fossil fuels.

COURTESY PHOTO / MIDDLEBURY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

A "Divestment Wall" constructed on campus in 1986 to protest the apartheid regime in South Africa and call for divestment.

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The Campus accepts submissions of opinions, reflections and letters to the editor from all members of our community, every week. Pieces from students, staff and faculty are all welcomed for consideration.

Email us at campus@middlebury.edu with your submissions!

MAC & DENNIS MOVE TO HEP ZOO

By VIRGINIA FRAU
Arts & Culture Editor

Hysterical and, at times, bashful laughter by a full-house audience filled the Hepburn Zoo two weeks ago as "Mac & Dennis Move to the Suburbs," a play created entirely by students, ran from Feb. 20–22. August Siegel '25 and Owen McCarthy '25 adapted the 20 minute episode from "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia" into a 40 minute play starring Thomas Long '25 and McCarthy as the eponymous Mac and Dennis, respectively.

In the original episode, Mac and Dennis opt to relocate from the city where rent prices are steep and accommodations lousy to the idyllic and peaceful suburbs. Quickly, however, the pair find that they are not cut out for the quiet monotony of suburbia, causing rifts in their friendship and prompting their descent into near-psychosis.

The play followed the episode's script almost exactly and with minimal set design — the stage was complete with a long dining table, kitchen counter and two mattresses — which demonstrated the show's impressive storytelling abilities. Most of the play took place inside Mac and Dennis's new home, with the notable exception of scenes in which Dennis made the hour-long commute to his job in Philadelphia, while McCarthy, equipped with a chair and a plastic steering wheel, occupied a small space downstage left under spotlight.

The play's inception was originally as a J-Term project originally scheduled for Jan. 22–23 before being cancelled due to illness among cast members. After watching the TV show episode together and studying it for tone and important comedic devices, the team quickly brought the show to life.

"We put it on its feet pretty much immediately after that with about two weeks of rehearsal, a week of tech, and three performances," said Hannah Alberti '26, who played Mac and Dennis's friend Dee.

Plans for the staging had been in the works for some two years. Siegel and McCarthy staged another episode of the show, "The Nightman Cometh," during their sophomore year in October of 2022, and were impressed by the source material's ability to translate to live theatre.

"The show is super high energy and very quick, with lots of jokes back to back to back, and I really love stuff like that as an actor, where the audience barely gets a chance to breathe because they're laughing," McCarthy said.

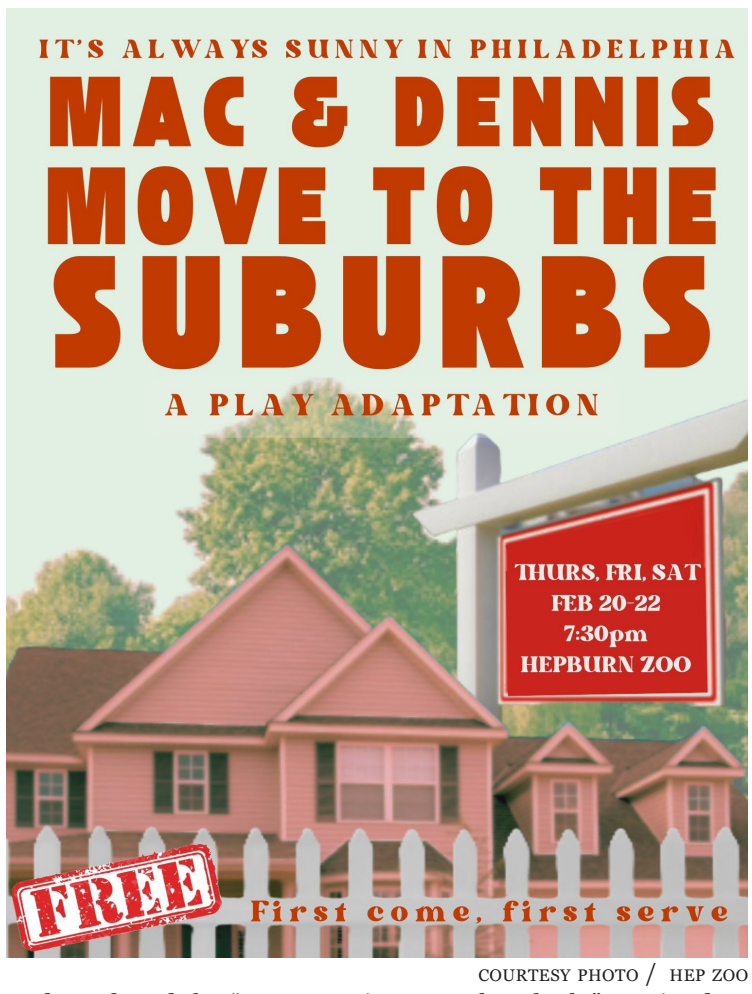
Without the benefit of video editing, some details from the original episode were lost in translation. In one particularly memorable scene, Dennis (McCarthy) strips to the (almost) nude in a terrifying expression of anger towards his gratingly cheery, small-talking neighbor, Wally (Owen Foberg '27.5). In the TV episode, it is made clear that this takes place in Dennis's imagination, and he and the audience are brought back to reality by the intrusion of Mac (Long). In the staging however, the real-time reenactment meant that after furiously disrobing, McCarthy had to speedily redress on stage in a comically long scene transition. This moment, made unique by live and bold acting choices, was delightful for the audience, even if some nuances were lost.

The play featured some remarkably comedic — if unhinged — performances from both McCarthy and Long. Long's portrayal of Mac as a gullible and highly endearing sidekick paired nicely with McCarthy's towering, booming, rageful Dennis. Other supporting performances included the largely mute "Old Man" (Josh Harkins '25) and Mac and Dennis's troublesome friends Charlie and Frank (Aidan Armstrong '25 and Max Gibson '25). Alberti's portrayal of the sensible Dee grounded the main pair's hysterics, and Foberg's buoyant and energetic portrayal of Wally was a popular favorite.

The opportunity to put on a piece like this is a unique one at a largely non-arts focused college. Most productions are either faculty-led, and rehearsed up to six days a week for several months, or serve as projects towards the completion of the Theatre major. "Theatre and performance at Middlebury is so often emotionally draining and light hearted things like this are just as necessary," Alberti explained.

Siegel emphasized the importance of community space like the Hep Zoo in creating small-scale, low-commitment theatre: "I will say this to anyone who will listen, but it is truly such a special space and resource," they said.

"Nowhere in the real world will you get a free space to put on essentially any sort of production or event, where they give you a budget to spend, and you're surrounded by people who want to join you in your endeavors for fun and not for pay," Siegel said. "There's truly nothing like it."



COURTESY PHOTO / HEP ZOO
Student-adapted play "Mac & Dennis Move to the Suburbs" premiered at the Hepburn Zoo.

MAKES YA FEEL: TUNES FROM ACROSS THE POND

By ELLIE TRINKLE
Senior Arts & Culture Editor

Gallery hoppers, Spotify stalkers, bookworms, Letterboxd users and anyone who enjoys art, this is the place for you. Makes Ya Feel highlights art across all of its mediums, small- and large-scale, that (you guessed it) makes ya feel!

Two blue suitcases stared at me as I twirled my headphones and tucked them into my pocket. It was early September, and I was about to leave to go study abroad in England — my first time across the pond. I remember being filled with both dread and excitement for all that lay ahead.

As I boarded the plane, I got an email from my best friend. She had written me a letter for my departure. After reading it, I wiped away some rare tears and plugged in my headphones, knowing that music would calm me down.

Now having returned from England, I keep revisiting all the playlists and songs I listened to while there. When I decided to bring this column back, I thought of no better way to kick off the first re-installment of this column than to reminisce on my abroad tunes. So, without further ado, here are some songs that encapsulated my abroad experience and "made me feel," from the flight all the way there and back.

"A Mercury Girl" – The Cleaners From Venus

The 80s band The Cleaners From Venus are experts at creating songs that make you feel like you're in a vacuum, completely absorbed by each intricate instrumental.

In my first few days abroad, I took long walks down the cobblestone streets in an attempt to orient myself. This song came on in a "recommended for you" playlist, and I was instantly hooked. The fuzzy instrumentals paired with gentle vocals completely encircle you. I felt so whole, so warmed by this song that everything slowly began to feel less daunting.

This song reminded me that the fear that comes with a new experience is never permanent. Plus, the album is titled "Going to England," so it's no wonder this song was constantly on repeat during my first few weeks.

"Save It For Later" – Eddie Vedder

Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder's voice is raw and personal, and his solo work is no exception. I had heard this song before, most memorably over the summer in an episode of "The Bear," but something about hearing it while abroad made it feel especially significant.

I was walking home with my friends after getting dinner on a late September night. Fall was in full swing; a soft gust of wind weaved through us as we walked and the leaves were beginning to turn. I was sharing a headphone with one of my friends when he played this song.

It felt like the perfect song for that moment, the light rain cascaded to the rhythm of gentle guitar strums, and Vedder's voice was a perfect, soothing hum that scored the rest of the walk home and put me at ease.

SKILES ROBERTS-SSALVADOR/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

"Uncle ACE" – Blood Orange

October marked an entire month of being abroad, and I found myself returning to songs that felt nostalgic. Blood Orange (also known as Dev Hynes) is a master at creating nostalgia through intricate, layered vocals and instrumentals. I experienced just this and also a fresh excitement, when returning to his 2013 album "Cupid Deluxe."

Though I had heard track three "Uncle ACE" many times before, listening to it as I frantically rushed out of class to a nearby coffee shop in a new city gave it an entirely different meaning. The song's last minute and a half is a complete immersion into guitar jumps and loud horns — which perfectly guided my adventures. During a weekend in London, I navigated the Tube for one of the first times to this song, and it brought lightness and fun to my journey.

The nostalgia that came from listening to the song before was transformed into a new memory: navigating a bustling city in crisp fall weather, allowing myself to wander.

"DASH SNOW" – Dean Blunt

Dean Blunt is a London-based alternative artist who I was already a huge fan of before going abroad, but I didn't quite understand how well his music encapsulates England until I was there. His music is similar to the gloomy, English weather — mellow and strangely comforting — that I became so familiar with.

This song in particular accompanied a long journey to my friend's flat in Hackney, which I later learned is where Dean Blunt grew up. As I got on my fourth train of the night, I remember watching the light rain obscure the view outside the window and exhaling. I was completely at peace. Right as my friend greeted me with a fish and chips dinner, the song ended, but the peace it brought me lingered for the remainder of the night.

"3 Days" – Rhye

On my last night abroad, my friends and I went out to dinner and then returned home. Not wanting to say goodbye just yet, we all sat and listened to music. This was one of the songs that came on, and as it played, we all swayed and laughed, letting the music melt into the background.

The next morning as I struggled to roll my blue suitcases down the cobblestone streets to the bus stop, I listened to this song on a loop, savoring my last few moments of living abroad. The weather was rare for England: sunny and still, an idyllic goodbye to the past months.

"We've got three days to sing this song," Rhye sings, and while I had a mere three minutes before my bus arrived to take me to the airport, I remember feeling grateful. As the song continued to play on my bus ride to the airport, I looked out the window and noticed that the city no longer felt so daunting — it was time to go home.

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BREAKING IT DOWN: RESISTANCE AND LIBERATION IN THE ALGERIAN BREAK DANCE MOVEMENT

By CHRISTY LIANG
Staff Writer

Middlebury Scholar in Residence in Dance Kari Wolfe Borni presented a thought-provoking talk on Maghrebi Contemporary Dance and the history of Algerian breakdancing on Feb. 26. The event was a part of the Carol Rifelj Faculty Lecture Series and gave insight into how dancers cope with their artistic aspirations amid the hostile socio-political conflicts in Algeria.

Borni is a dancer, choreographer and scholar. Her fieldwork research, supported by Fulbright and other fellowships, spans fifteen years of participating in contemporary dance practice and performances across the Middle East and North Africa — including sites in Marrakech, Algiers, Tunis, Beirut, Amman and Ramallah. She is currently researching interspecies modes of physical communication and, more broadly, performance-making within the non-human world.

As a physical act, breakdance relies on intensive contact with the ground, as well as acrobatic flips and spins. The art form is often regarded as a channel for subversive cultural statements, gaining worldwide attention when it was first introduced as a sport category in the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Breakdance first came to Algeria during the aftermath of the Algerian Civil War, where state control continued to prevail through information monitoring and forced curfews, wherein any young men out on the street past 7 p.m were arrested. Amid the widespread pirating of audio cassettes and videotapes, a VHS videotape of German breakdancer Niels Robitzky was leaked in Algeria, and it was quickly copied and distributed as a training manual during the lockdown. Amid a climate of strict curfews, fear and violence, breakdance burgeoned as a subculture that diverged from traditional sports played by young Algerians.

As a genre, breakdance is accessible to all; you don't need any formal training to participate. In terms of space, the art form is equally accessible. Boxing gyms, soccer fields, public parks and even apartment rooftops are all variations of the "dance studio."

Two themes that Dr. Borni frequently touched on were exile and uprootedness, because most performances were banned in Algeria, but Borni also suggested that some dancers prefer this lifestyle.

"Dancers express extreme relief to never have to perform the work in Algeria itself, alluding to the homoeroticism of the work as proposing potentially serious, reputational, if not corporeal threat," Borni said.

Dancers from the National Ballet of Algeria made this argument with the hope of gaining refugee asylum status while on tour in Montreal. Citing Islamist opposition against dance as an indication of homosexuality and depravity, many of them later acknowledged in interviews with Borni that these sentiments were in fact exaggerated, and that they just wanted a means out of Algeria to make a living and, most importantly, to be taken seriously as artists.

Dancers often use language such as "breaking down" or "opening out of restriction" to expand their movement repertoire beyond the constraints of the more traditional, heavily masculinized breakdancing practices.

"I used to be very hard and very stuck with everything; I needed to expand my body and my mind," said a dancer Borni interviewed in her research.

However, this liberation story also detailed a confinement to exodus: Algerian contemporary dance is consistently banned in the country, complicating dancers' relationship to the practice.

Contemporary Algerian dance presents a subjectivity that grapples with uprooted, in-betweenness, rupture and displacement. The word Harraga translates to "the act of burning one's papers," and more broadly refers to the action of moving out of the Maghrebi in defiance of bureaucratic rules and elaborate visa systems. It also represents bodily resistance against unemployment, state surveillance and border control, as well as the enraged courage to break all boundaries that stand in one's way. Today, we can all be seen as part of Harraga.

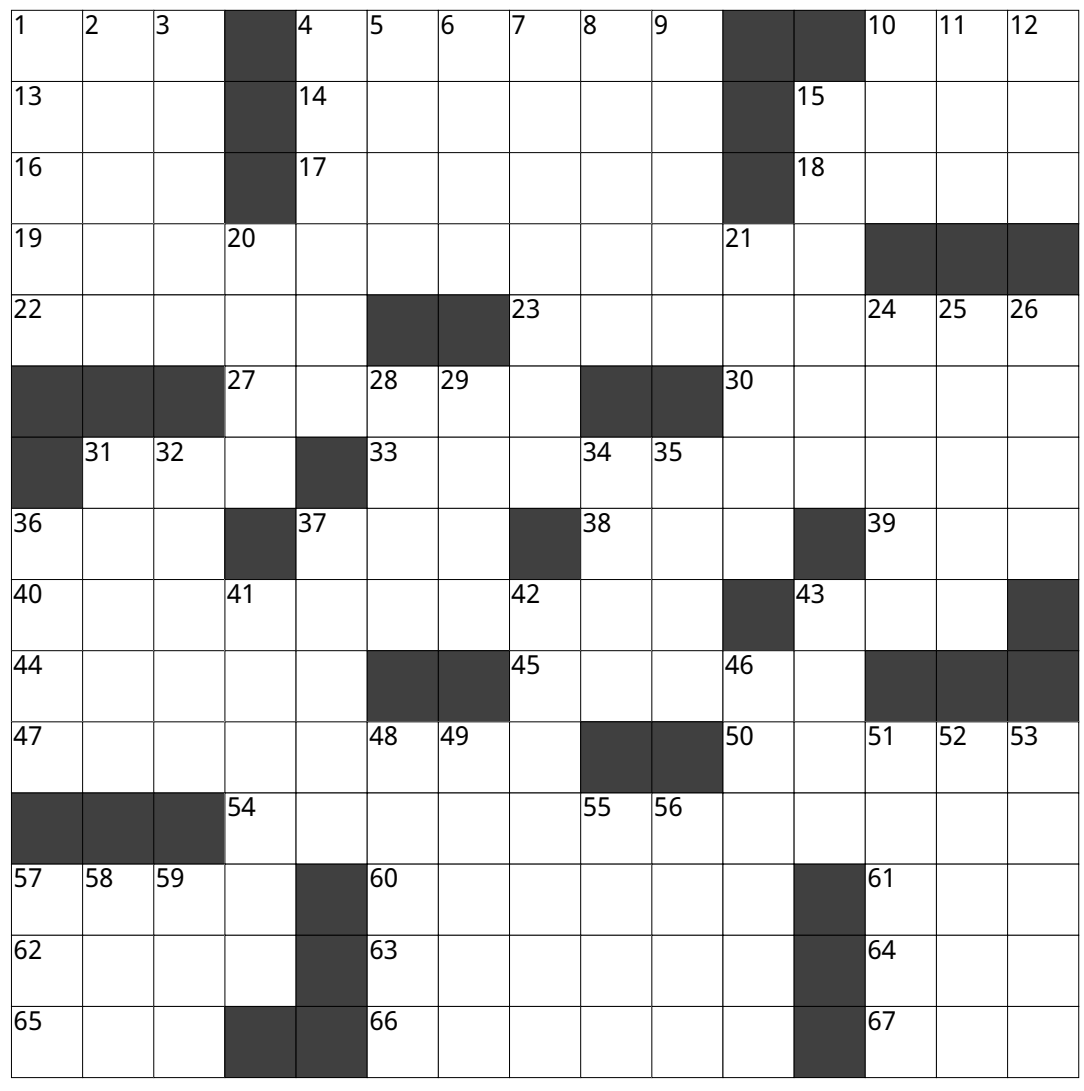
"By leaving a place where we were born and raised, we find ourselves drawn into a whirlwind of indescribable events. A cruel reality pushes us despite ourselves to leave. Our soul and our heart are also harragas. We long for escape and seek to build what is destroyed, what is broken within us, scraps of a life that has been stolen from us," Borni said.

COURTESY PHOTO/ CAROL RIFELG FACULTY LECTURE SERIES

Kari Wolfe Borni lectured about Maghrebi Contemporary Dance as a part of the Carol Rifelj Faculty Lecture Series.

Backup Options

Josh Harkins



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10 Tonic go-with
13 A dress line
14 Inhalant of the alkyl nitrite family
15 Hoagie
16 In the style of
17 Bless with oil
18 Minnesota Congresswoman Ilhan
19 *Arid and dry African expanse
22 Praise
23 Playful aquatic mammal
27 Cowboy implement
30 Musical ending
31 18-Across's UK equivalents
33 *Verification code that confirms who you are when entered at, say, a 40-Across
36 Slime
37 Plead
38 Out of this world abode, for short
39 Second most valuable US cash crop
40 *Contraption that gives you cash money
43 Orchestra section, abbr.
44 "I already know you"
45 Communist or Republican, for example
47 Whole host
50 Make into law
54 Backups, things that are repetitive, or a clue to the starred answers
57 Assistant who used to honestly answer the question "I have a dead body, what do I do with it"
60 "It's so clear to me"
61 Cit. style
62 Former Attorney General Holder
63 Sticker that you probably won't find on American flags, ironically
64 Nike brand
65 Pos. opp.
66 Complained
67 Profs assts.

DOWN
1 Never-ending card game, with "10"
2 "Chill"
3 Frequent Peyton Manning utterance
4 Athens' rival
5 Mrs. Chaplin
6 "Like two peas in ___"
7 Peeks through the shutters at
8 Past or present
9 "Coffee ___?"
10 Tiara element
11 NPR host Glass
12 One of English's FANBOYS
15 Time traveling implement in a 2010 film
20 Start of a Shakespeare title
21 Stays with
24 Statistics implement
25 Throw in the dirt, perhaps
26 Like many cheeks in cold weather
28 Blueprint detail
29 Deep exhale
31 Murder locale, in a common trope
32 French Gala, for example?
34 One of Columbus' ships in 1492
35 ___ interface
36 Rudely stare
37 Wash
41 Measure
42 "The Girl from ___," we hear she's young and lovely
43 Pair, as with bluetooth
46 Set up under the Big Top?
48 Loathing
49 Either film director Joe or Anthony
51 Shoot for
52 "Queen of Salsa" Cruz
53 Nicolas I and II
55 University leader
56 Asst. to 57-D
57 One of 100, in D.C.
58 Wrath
59 Unfairly decide

FROM THE ARCHIVES: "SCRAPPED" PASTES AND PATCHES THE MIDDLEBURY COMMUNITY TOGETHER

By NORAH KHAN
Arts & Culture Editor

Wondering what connects Middlebury students throughout time? Look to Middlebury Special Collections' new "Scrapped" exhibit for the answer.

"Scrapped," curated by Ambar Vasquez-Mitra '25 and Yvette Fordjour '26, is currently on display in Davis Family Library and Special Collections. The exhibit showcases a variety of scrapbooks, with some dating back to the early 20th century. It features the intimate and enduring themes of being a student at Middlebury: grades, sports, romance, dorm-life and winter carnival. Yellowing pages plastered with personal mementos are found in the glass cases, with a variety of photos, dance cards and posters.

"There's a lot of curation that goes into the creation of the scrapbook itself, the way that someone might put a picture next to a dried corsage from a dance or a dance card, and the captions feel like inside jokes. These make them a really exciting primary source," said Special Collections Public Services and Outreach Specialist Mikaela Taylor '15. "You really get to feel like you were there and almost like you're making a friend."

Vasquez-Mitra and Fordjour spent roughly three months selecting materials, writing labels, researching the alumni who created the scrapbooks and coming up with an idea for how they wanted to structure the exhibit.

"We started mid to late October. We didn't really go in with a plan, so we pulled a bunch of scrapbooks that really came from us being nosey, like we would just flip through them and find something funny. From that, we started noticing that a lot of the experiences documented in the scrapbooks were very similar to experiences that we have had," Vasquez-Mitra said.

Both students connected the themes to their time as students at Middlebury. Vasquez-Mitra found relatability in the social events, academic stress and even weekend trips to Montréal that were depicted throughout the exhibit.

However, not all of the exhibit is lighthearted and fun. A focal point of the exhibit is change and continuity over time, looking at how Middlebury and campus culture has evolved. In the earlier scrapbooks, there are no students of color. Other spreads feature negative depictions of certain groups — namely Native Americans and Black people. The two wanted to include a case dedicated to the portrayal of racism and how Middlebury was idealized as a colonizing institution in the Native land of Vermont.

"As a Black person working in the archives, there is something so intimate when you read a document of someone degrading your entire humanity, doing blackface. There is a lot of reckoning there when you walk into work. It was important to share the burden with the community to say, yes, we've come this far, and there is still so much to be done," Fordjour said.

Vasquez-Mitra echoed this sentiment, highlighting the importance of displaying content even if it is harder to digest.

"There is a lot of difficult content in the scrapbooks because they are products of their time. We want to acknowledge that, learn about that, and also showcase the fact that they existed and how Middlebury as an institution is moving past that," she said.

Middlebury became co-educational in 1833, before which it was two separate colleges, one for men and one for women. The classes and dormitories were divided by gender. Due to social norms of the time, a lot of the rules and regulations in the college handbook were for women: what clothing they wore, what times they were allowed in and out of their dorms in accordance with curfews and excursions. There was a lot of policing of women and the way they handled themselves on campus. One of the cases includes a warning slip for a young student who was penalized for being one minute late to her dorm curfew.

Taylor also spoke about how Special Collections plays an important role in exhibits such as "Scrapped." Through providing access to the materials housed in the Special Collections Library, curators are able to devise their exhibits. Taylor also spoke about the different ways in which the college acquires the archival materials that are housed in Special Collections.

"Sometimes a descendant [of an alumni] will be cleaning out an attic and find Middlebury College paraphernalia, and think 'What do I do with this?' The materials that are sent over are really rich historical documents that not only reveal so much information about Middlebury, but also about the time," Taylor explained.

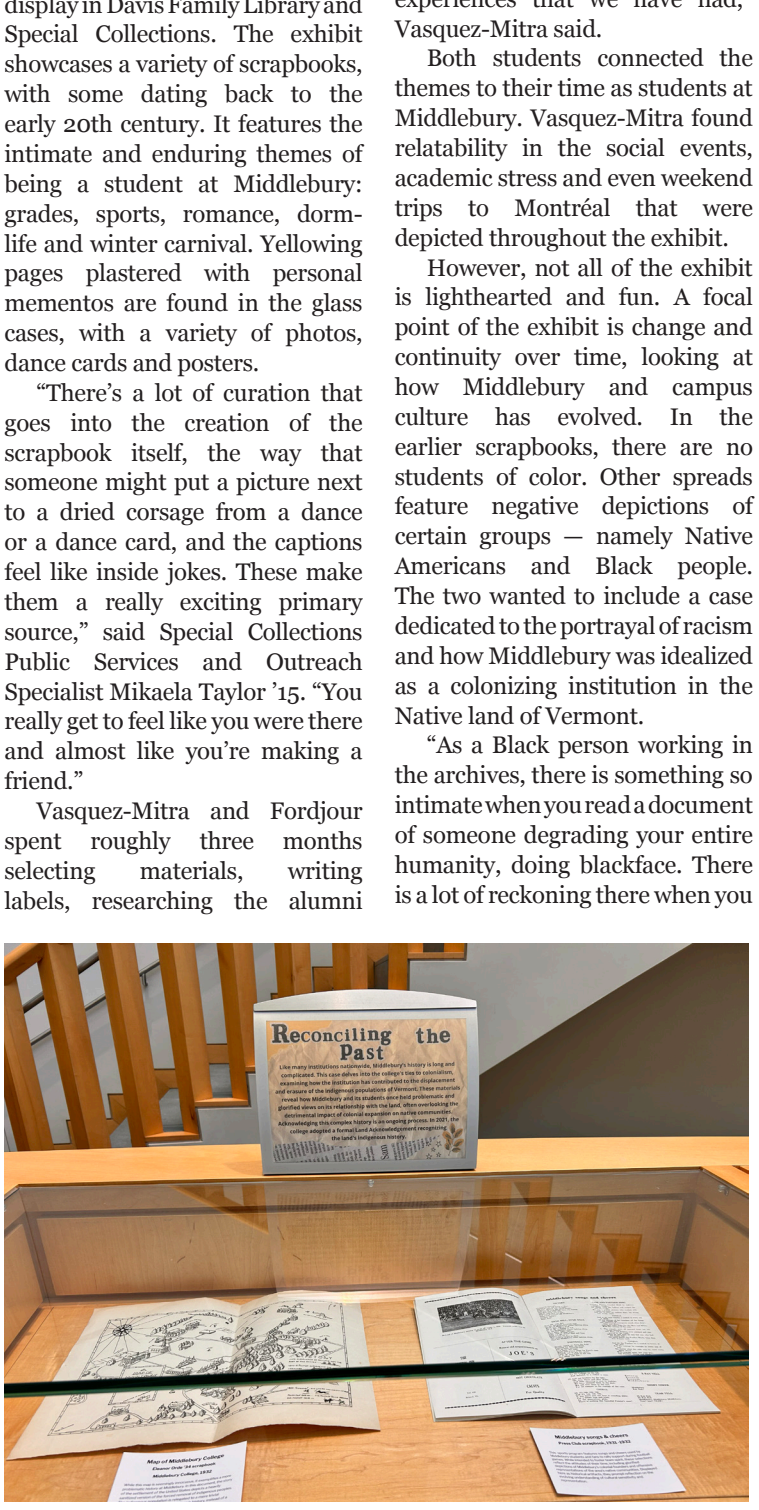
The exhibit ultimately reinforces the importance of preserving physical memories through art and the community that forms as a result.

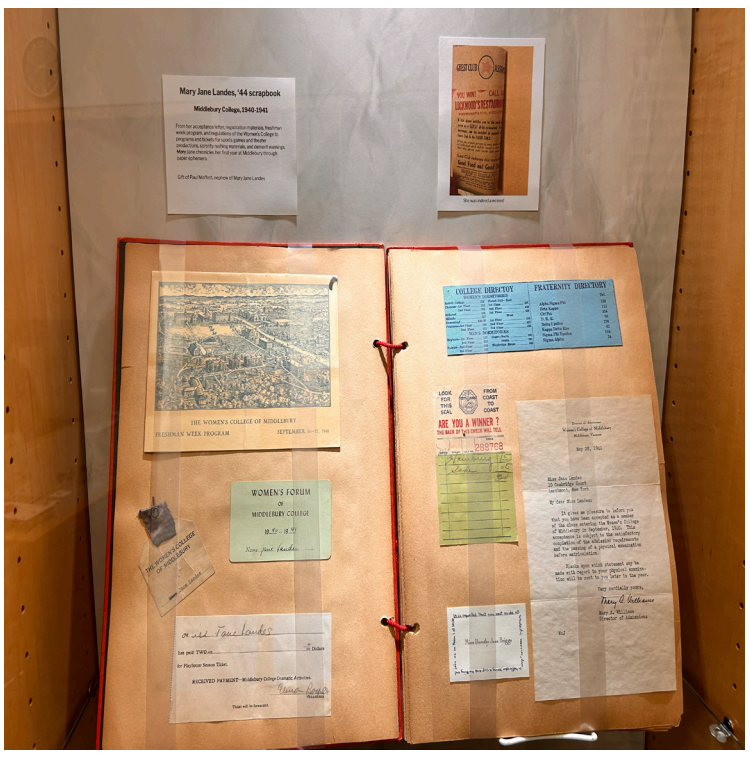
"Having stuff on your phone, on the cloud, is convenient and you can have your pictures anywhere, but what happens when you lose your phone? It's important to enjoy memories and be able to see others' memories, if not for yourself, for future generations to be able to talk about it," Vasquez-Mitra said.

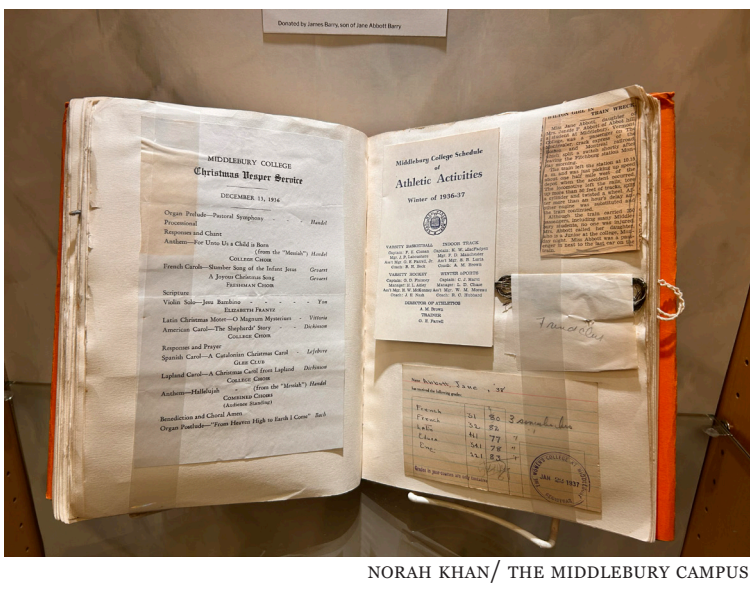
Fordjour pointed out the importance of having agency over crafting stories in the present-day.

"This experience made me appreciate archival work and what archivists do in saving and preserving our history. I know deep down I am adding into a lineage of people who wanted to sustain and preserve our lineages and history," Fordjour said.

So next time you are struggling with classes, or simply want to show off your tokens of joy and preserve your memories, consider the solace and wonder that some glue and paper can provide. Who knows, maybe your scrapbook will be part of an exhibit in the future!







NORAH KHAN/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

New Special Collections exhibit "Scrapped" highlights the college's history through scrapbooks from Middlebury communtiy members.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY OVERCOMES STRUGGLES TO BEAT WILLIAMS 2–1 IN THRILLING OVERTIME WIN

By KANAN CLIFFORD
Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO
Kylie Quinlan '25 scored the game-winning shot against rival Williams in overtime of the quartefinals.

A rowdy crowd of nearly a thousand held their breath as Kylie Quinlan '25 skated towards the goal, 5:07 elapsed in a tense back-and-forth overtime period. Quinlan, a flash of navy and white, pushing through a sea of purple Ephs jerseys, smacked the puck into the left corner of Williams' net. Coaches, players and fans alike erupted.

Three years removed from an NCAA national championship, defending champions Middlebury (#2 seed in the NESCAC tournament) faced #7-ranked Williams on Saturday at Chip Kenyon '85 Arena in a high-stakes, NESCAC quarterfinals.

Middlebury won the opening faceoff, controlling the puck in Williams' zone for the first four minutes of the game. The Panthers managed 13 shots on goal in the first period, pressuring Williams' goalie Erin Pye, but struggling to convert their strong offensive sets to competitive shots.

Williams' best scoring opportunity in the first came 12 minutes in, when Skyler Moore stole the puck and bore down on Middlebury goalie Sophia Merageas '25, only for the shot to be smothered by Merageas. The first period ended scoreless.

The second period brought moments of chaos for the Panthers. Middlbeury had a couple of sloppy puck control moments, resulting in numerous heart-rate escalating moments on the defensive end. Merageas had one of her finest saves 7:49 in, rejecting a crowded tip-in attempt and recording one of her 31 saves of the game — the second time she has eclipsed the 30 save mark this season.

"She's in her own space, her own mindset," captain Cat Appleyard '25 said of Merageas' goalie play. "We all want to do well, not only for ourselves, but for Sophia. It would have been a completely different game if she wasn't in the net."

Momentum shifted midway through the second at the 12-minute mark, following a controversial no-tripping call against Williams by the referees. Coach Bill Mandigo was visibly unhappy with it, as were Middlebury players and fans, but the Panthers used the call as fuel and proceeded to rain down shots on the opponent's goal, increasing their physicality. Appleyard noted that intense, physical practices prepare the players for the reality of a hard-fought game.

Despite back-to-back power plays late in the period, the Panthers couldn't break through.

Unfortunately for Middlebury, Pye continued her streak of excellent saves — even through a Panther power play towards the later side of the second period. It looked as if Cece Ziegler '25 might break the deadlock with 40 seconds remaining, but she was hooked before she could get a shot off, setting up another power play to open the third.

This time, Middlebury delivered. Kate Flynn '27 buried the shot off a face-off assist from Olivia McManus '27 – 1-0 Panthers.

"Our power play has been strong throughout the season," Appleyard said. "So getting that first goal [while having the advantage] really boosted our confidence."

For a moment, it looked as if Middlebury might squeak through with a 1–0 victory (and with it a nice early dinner for yours truly) until 18:34 into the third, when the Ephs countered with a goal of their own. After a minute and a half of pressuring the Panthers' zone, Williams' Lucie Bond netted the equalizer, silencing the home crowd and sending the game to overtime.

Fans inhaled a sharp breath as the overtime whistle rang. They didn't let it out until Quinlan's game-winning goal sealed a thrilling matchup of NESCAC rivals just minutes into the extra frame.

The two teams split the regular season series, with the Panthers winning 7–0 in the first game and falling 4–1 in the second. Middlebury's 18–5–1 overall record (10–5–1 conference) far outstrips the Ephs' 12–11–1 record (5–10–1 conference), but four of the Panthers' five losses this season came on the road.

At home, the Panthers have dominated the opposition, with their only home loss coming to Bowdoin on Jan. 25. Otherwise, they have secured 10 wins and one tie. Coming into this game, Appleyard projected confidence regarding home ice advantage — adding that the team has 10 seniors who bring experience in intense playoff environments at home and away games.

"But playoffs are tough," Appleyard said, "We need to prepare to fight into overtime each game and win the close ones."

In many ways, this playoff run mirrors last year's — and the run in 2022 — creating a full-circle moment for many of the seniors.

"Going back to the locker room after the third period brought me back to my freshman year," said Appleyard about her leadership role. "Except now I'm the one on the other end sharing wisdom."

Quinlan's goal sends the Panthers to the NESCAC semifinals, where they will face #3 Colby College on March 8 in Amherst, Mass. The winner will advance to the conference final the next day.

The semifinal game will test the Panthers' budding confidence, as Colby previously handed the team two shutout losses on Feb. 21 and 22. The Panthers will look to turn the tables, giving Middlebury women's hockey a chance for the sweet taste of redemption and a shot at the NESCAC title.

For those lucky folks with cars and no readings, Amherst is calling — show up next weekend to support the Panthers!

PANTHERS STUMBLE IN OPENING WEEKEND AGAINST EMORY

By THEO MANIATIS
Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO / STEVE MALLEY
Aiden Han '27 went 1-for-3 with a walk and a pair of RBI in the game against Emory.

Under balmy 70-degree Georgia skies, the Middlebury men's baseball team opened its 2025 campaign with a sobering reality check, dropping all three games to a battle-tested Emory University squad. The defending NESCAC champions showed clear signs of off-season rust as they were overwhelmed 19–5 and 12-2 in Saturday's doubleheader, before falling 5–3 in a more competitive Sunday contest.

The Panthers struggled to find their feet on both sides of the diamond throughout the weekend. In the first game, Emory jumped out to a 3–0 lead in the first inning. Middlebury showed life when catcher Joe Basso '27 drove two runs home with a single in the second. The game stayed within reach until Emory blew it open with six runs in the third and ran away with the game.

In the second contest, Anthony Pellagrin '27 opened the scoring with a homer to left field. Emory responded with six straight before Pellegrin knocked another one over the left-field fence, capping an incredible game for the sophomore. Unfortunately, it wasn't enough to overcome Emory's explosive offense, as they cruised to another victory.

Sunday's game was much closer. Infielder Aiden Han '27 drove home a pair of runs to make it 2–1 in the second, giving Middlebury its first lead of the series. However, the advantage was short-lived: Two unearned runs and a double allowed Emory to take a 4–2 advantage by the third inning. The Panthers pulled a run back in the seventh on a sacrifice fly, but the comeback bid stalled there.

Contrasting levels of preparation told the story for the weekend. Emory had already played 10 preseason games before the clash against Middlebury, while the Panthers had their first outdoor practice just last Wednesday once the unrelenting cold and snowy weather at Middlebury had finally abated.

Although this weekend was hardly an ideal start for the Panthers, there's no reason to hit the panic button. The team, coached by the experienced Mike Leonard, remains an athletic group with a lot of recent winning experience.

"I have full confidence in our group," Leonard wrote to The Campus. "Our goal is to be playing meaningful games in May. Even though the results aren't what we were hoping for this weekend, these games give us an opportunity to learn and will hopefully make us a better team down the road."

The Panthers are navigating a period of transition after 23 players graduated over the past two seasons. The roster features 12 new freshmen, including an especially promising pitcher Reed Hyde '28.

"We're going to have to battle [and] learn. We won't be perfect from the start," he told me frankly during an interview at the Grille.

Whatever the team might lack in experience, it more than makes up for in work ethic. "Almost every second of the day, you can go into the field house, and in the back corner somebody will be throwing, hitting, stretching," said Hyde, who has played baseball since age four and was immediately struck by the dedication of his teammates when he arrived on campus. "I need to start working harder, otherwise it'll be tough to get on the field."

The team is also led by an impressive group of upperclassmen. Co-captain Justin Lessing '25 is coming off a season where he was named a Fourth Team All-American and won NESCAC Pitcher of the Year honors. Fellow senior and co-captain Kyle McCausland '25 was a Third Team All-American in 2023. And, perhaps the most underrated factor: the team has significant winning experience after being crowned NESCAC champions in 2022 and 2024.

Coach Leonard will lean on his veteran core to guide the team forward.

"We have really strong leadership on the team, a lot of pitching depth, and a high level of athleticism," he noted. "While we lack experience, I think that we'll learn quickly as a group and believe that our strong leadership will help keep the team together even when we struggle like we have this weekend. These past few months, they've been mentors for us."

One of the greatest aspects of baseball is that its lengthy season with many opportunities for improvement. Although each game holds significance, there's plenty of room to make mistakes and atone for them accordingly throughout the season. For instance, on the morning of June 3 last season, the New York Mets were 11 games under .500 at 24–35. They finished 89–73, with an exhilarating trip to the National League Championship series. The slow start for the Panthers is no meaningful indication for how the rest of the year will unfold.

Middlebury won't have much time to dwell on the disappointing opening series, as they return to Vermont for Tuesday's home opener against Colby-Sawyer College. The forecast for game day is currently a 40-degree high, a far cry from sundrenched Georgia, but maybe some more familiar weather is exactly what the team needs.

SEVEN QUESTIONS WITH MATTHEW HENSEL '25, CO-CAPTAIN OF MIDDLEBURY SWIMMING AND DIVING

By TING CUI
Senior Sports Editor

Matthew Hensel '25, co-captain of the Middlebury men's swim team alongside Samuel Hughes '25 and Jack Undercofler '25, recently closed out his final season in the pool. The Economics major and Environmental Studies minor from Houston helped break the school record in the 800-meter relay at this year's NESCAC Championships hosted at Middlebury. In this edition of Seven Questions, he reflects on his competitive swimming journey, leadership experience and the memories he'll carry forward as he graduates.

Ting Cui: You recently competed at the 2025 NESCAC Championships. How did it go for you individually, and what was it like to break the school record in the 800-meter relay with your team?

Matthew Hensel: Individually, I think NESCACs went about as well as I could've hoped. Everyone always wants their last meet to go well, and I was fortunate enough to go personal bests in all three of the [individual] events and all the relays as well. I couldn't have asked for it to have gone much better, to be honest. To be able to swim the way I did, go a bunch of best times, and overall place higher than I ever had before – it was pretty cool to be able to do that and end on a super high note.
As for the relay record, that one was really cool. The guys on that relay with me — Rodin, Pierce and John — we had a hunch since early December that it was gonna be the four of us that would have a shot at breaking it. Having that be a common goal for us since December and then finally seeing all the fruits of our labor come to fruition on the first night of NESCACs to open up the meet, that was pretty special.

TC: In your sophomore year, you also helped set the school record in the 200 medley relay. What did that achievement mean to you at the time?

MH: Sophomore year was a roller coaster. I was fortunate enough to have a lot of success freshman year and wanted to carry that over into my sophomore year, and got very hyper-fixated on the times. When I got to my championship season, success was binary – it was either I get the time or I don't. I ended up getting disqualified in two different races [at NESCACs], which no one wants at a championship meet. But that same night, I came back and it was on the relay that broke the record. That was really cool after the morning getting DQ'd to come back and be on the relay record.

TC: As a senior captain this year, what has the leadership experience been like for you?

MH: It's been, for lack of a better term, a lot of fun. I feel like as a men's team in particular, there's a very good culture that's been set in place, and you really don't have to do too much as a leader. Obviously, you want to lead by example, and when issues come up, you're the one dealing with them. But it didn't feel like a massive shift in responsibility, I could still be Matthew Hensel without having to do something different. I wanted to stay genuine, I didn't want being the captain to change who I am.

TC: What brought you from Texas all the way to Middlebury as a swimmer?

MH: I was never completely bought into swimming until the end of my sophomore year in high school. At that point, I was like, "Okay, this is a goal of mine to swim in college." I wasn't particularly fast then, so I definitely was not looking at Division I. Having been in Houston my whole life, I just wanted a completely different change of scenery for college. Looking at the Northeast and thinking about good academics, liberal arts, and a program where I could swim and potentially fit in with the team, that was kind of the initial criteria.

TC: Looking back on your four years with the Middlebury swim team, what moments stand out as your favorite memories?

MH: That's a hard question. The [800-meter NESCAC] record is definitely up there from a performance perspective.
But I think what I'll remember the most over the last four years is, it sounds cliché, but it's all the little things with the guys on the team. Every winter over New Year's, we always take a training trip down to Florida. It's the entire team there in a hotel, training for nine days. It's a lot of swimming, but outside the pool, we're all hanging out together on the beach, throwing a football or just running around having fun. Or the camping trip we take in the fall… you're out camping together, sitting around the fire, telling stories. It's moments like those that I look back on the most.

TC: Now that your competitive swimming career is coming to a close, how are you feeling about this transition?

MH: It hasn't fully hit me yet that I'm done. I've been swimming since I was seven years old competitively, so there hasn't really been a point in my life where swimming hasn't been there. You wake up Monday morning after the meet, and then you're done, so that's been interesting to process and one that's gonna take a while.
In the moment, I don't miss the practices and the daily grind of just getting up, going to lift, going to class, and then having practice for two hours. I don't miss that. But it'll definitely hit me at random times — Sunday during the final session at NESCACs… talking to my parents and my coach after my last race, it was pretty sad then. I think it'll manifest itself more once the new season comes around because it'll be weird that I'm not a part of this anymore.

TC: Do you have a go-to hype song to get ready for meets?

MH: I have a couple of hype songs that I cycle through. Any old Eminem songs like "Cinderella Man" or "Not Afraid" were always big ones for me. "Money Longer" by Lil Uzi Vert was also in the rotation for a while. Anything with a high tempo and intensity, usually some sort of hip-hop, to get me excited.

WOMEN'S LACROSSE DEFEATS AMHERST IN FIRST GAME OF THE SEASON, EARNING 52ND CONSECUTIVE WIN

By BROOKE FRIBERG
Sports Editor

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

The Panthers celebrate after a goal during Saturday's 15-6 victory against Amherst.

Last Saturday, Middlebury women's lacrosse opened their season on a high note, defeating #21 Amherst College 15–6. The 2024 season was particularly notable for the Panthers, who secured their third consecutive NESCAC title and remained undefeated for the second straight year. With a strong start to 2025, the Panthers are undoubtedly poised to continue their tradition of success.

Saturday's victory against the Mammoths marked Middlebury's 52nd-straight win, but also brought individual accolades for several players. Skylar Lach '26 achieved a career record of 5 goals, goalie Gina Driscoll '25 tied her previous record with 12 saves in net, and three assists by Maggie Coughlin '25 moved her into sixth place among the program's history, with a total of 74 career assists.

Amherst secured possession off the first draw, but the Panthers dug in to start the game with endurance and intensity. The Mammoths took the first shot of the game, but proved to be no match for Driscoll, who stopped the ball with her unbeatable reaction time.

Minutes later, Kate Motley '27 caused a turnover at the midfield, grabbed the ground ball, and took off down the field. Motley dodged her defender and sniped a shot into the upper-left corner, scoring both her first career goal and the first goal of the 2025 season. As players and fans celebrated, Motley's early goal set the tone for the game, signaling that the Panthers were ready to pick up where they left off last season.

Soon after, Coughlin fed Lach for a quick-stick shot in front of the crease, putting the Panthers up 2–0 early on in the first quarter. Lach struck again at the five-minute mark, followed by a goal from Caroline Messer '26 with only minutes left in the quarter. Well-positioned with a 4–0 lead heading into the second quarter, there was no doubt that the Panthers had full control over the game.

"The tricky thing about the first game of the season is that every year the composition and strategies of a team shift, so it can be difficult to properly scout a team. We took the game yesterday as an opportunity to focus on our team, our play, and implement everything we have worked on for the last month of preseason," Caroline Adams '26 said. "We were able to set the tone for what we wanted Middlebury Women's Lacrosse to be and played with grit, joy and love for each other."

The Panthers took the first possession of the second quarter, with Lucy Bishop '27 winning the draw. A foul against Middlebury gave Hope Shue '25 a free-position shot, which she buried for her first goal of the season. As the 2024 NESCAC Offensive Player of the Year, Shue's goal reaffirmed her status as a key offensive threat. Minutes later, Shue assisted Motley for another goal, putting the Panthers at a 6–0 advantage.

At this point, the pressure was on for Amherst to make their mark on the scoreboard, but draw-expert Adams was not going to let that happen just yet. Adams secured the Panther's next possession, keeping the momentum in Middlebury's sticks. Despite her strong individual performance, the junior midfielder credits the team's strong foundation and support system.

"We often remind each other that we 'stand on the shoulders of those who came before us' and that we get to play every day because of the amazing women who came before us," Adams said. "Every year, our coaches connect each one of us with an Alumni sister, a former player who will provide support throughout the season. These connections remind us of the power and love of the Middlebury Women's Lacrosse family and inspire us to work hard every day."

After an intense back-and-forth, Amherst finally secured their first goal halfway through the second quarter, but they still had a long way to go. Before halftime, Adams capitalized on an eight meter shot, scoring her first goal of the season. In the plays that followed, Amherst received two yellow cards, giving Middlebury a man-up advantage and helping Maddie Ackerman '27 score her first goal of the year with an assist from Lach.

The Panthers continued their dominance in the second half. Just 36 seconds into the third quarter, Siobhan Colin '28 fed Lach an assist for her third goal, completing a hatrick.

This year, the Panthers welcomed nine new first years to the team. Colin, one of new additions, has already made an impact in her first game.

"I'm really excited about the team dynamic this year. We have 14 seniors that all individually contribute so much for the team. I've felt really lucky to be able to rely on and witness their special leadership on and off the field. We also have an awesome freshman squad that brings so much energy and grit to the locker room and practices. The team is really deep this year, so I can't wait to see what we can accomplish this season," Lach said.

Despite Middlebury's momentum, the Mammoths managed to knock out four-straight goals, narrowing the deficit to 9–5. With a mere seven seconds left in the third quarter, Shue scored off of an assist from Anna Spehr '25, pushing the game into double-digits at 10–5 heading into the final frame.

Amherst opened the fourth and final quarter with a goal. However, in true Panther fashion, Middlebury quickly reacted, with Couglin scoring her first goal of the season and Lach her fourth. Middlebury now led 12–6 against Amherst, with about 10 minutes remaining.

Recognizing the urgency, the Mammoths called for a time out, hoping to slow the relentless Panthers. Following the timeout, Shue snagged the ball off of the draw which resulted in Adams scoring her second goal of the game. The final moment saw Couglin assist Shue's third goal, extending Middlebury's lead.

Amherst attempted more shots, but they stood no chance against Driscoll's stellar goalkeeping. The final goal of the game, made possible by another assist from Adams, was secured by sharp-shooter Lach, in her fifth goal, placing the Panthers up by nine goals in the final score (15–6).

Despite Saturday's win, the team remains humble, remembering that their past successes raise the level of competition they'll face moving forward.

"Coming off of last season, I think we'll have a target on our back each game we play. I think something we try to emphasize is that it's a privilege to get everyone's 100% and to not take anything for granted or dwell on any past successes," Lach said. "We take each game one at a time and prioritize our own goals and expectations to give our all and play our best for each other."

After a quick turnaround, the Panthers second game was held on Tuesday, where they defeated #14 Babson 17-6. Standout performances from Tuesday's game include four goals for Shue and three for Lach.

This Saturday, the Panthers head to Brunswick, Maine to face the Bowdoin Polar Bears in their third game of the season.

PAINTING PROFESSIONALS: THE BOLDNESS OF REVEREND DR. FRANÇOIS SCARBOROUGH CLEMMONS

By JUNE SU
Senior Multimedia Editor

COURTESY PHOTO / PEOPLE MAGAZINE

Reverend Dr. François Scarborough Clemmons is best known for playing Mr. Clemmons on "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood.

Reverend Dr. François Scarborough Clemmons is a lifelong professional musician, grammy-winning opera singer, author, and beloved member of the Middlebury community. He is perhaps best known for playing Mr. Clemmons in "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" and being the first recurring African American children's TV show character. He worked and taught at Middlebury College for 16 years as the Alexander Twilight Artist in Residence and director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Spiritual Choir. He is now retired and continues to sing and live in Middlebury.

I had the great privilege of talking to Dr. Clemmons one winter afternoon in his warm apartment, filled to the brim with memorabilia from his achievements and adventures. I was enraptured by the rich life experiences he shared about his artistic career and personal life. Who is the Dr. Clemmons behind the awards and prestige?

There is one question I always ask when in conversation with creative professionals: "How do you deal with performance anxiety?" With some meager experience playing the viola, (not a violin!) in a middle-school orchestra, I remember all too well that musical performance can generate existential fright like nothing else. For Dr. Clemmons, the answer is simple. There was nothing to "deal with" in the first place.

"I wasn't afraid. Never, no, never. No, I was naive… I took performance as a major because I wanted to be out there. I wanted the attention. And I love the music. I just don't know how people get along in life without some serious musical outlets."

From an early age, Dr. Clemmons was determined to make music his lifelong endeavor. In a run-in with his high school college counselor, Ms. Crysen, in Youngstown, Ohio, Clemmons was confronted about his decision to apply to the music conservatory at Oberlin College. He had done so instead of completing the forms for vocational school she had passed out to all the Black students.

Clemmons added that all the Black guys in his class had filled out these applications except for him. Meanwhile, many of his white classmates were on track to university. Some were even multi-generational legacy students at institutions like Oberlin. Clemmons animatedly acted out her beration.

"You're applying to these colleges, you know you can't afford to pay for them — how do you know whether or not you sing well enough? And you're spending all that money for applications?" Dr Clemmons said, repeating what the counselor told him.

"So I said to her, 'Ms. Crysen, you don't know who I am, and you don't know what I can do! I have no intention of going to a vocational school… I'm going to Oberlin.' And so we got into a little bit of a noisy. I always say that's when Diva Clemmons was born because she burst out there and said, 'No, I'm not going to do it.' I spoke my truth to power well."

As I became engrossed in this story, a sparkling ornament hanging off of a shelf behind Dr. Clemmons caught my eye: four pink letters spelling "Diva." He continued to describe how this challenge only made his conviction stronger.

"I despised this woman. I was a young guy full of blood and fire, and for her to try to tell me what I couldn't do was the challenge that I needed. I was going to make it happen through a miracle. A miracle!"

And a miracle is exactly what arrived on Dr. Clemmons' doorstep. After the fallout with Ms. Crysen, he was called into the high school principal's office. He was forced to apologize, but was surprised to find out that the principal himself was an Oberlin alumnus and willing to recommend him. Coupled with his guidance and even financial support for applications from his high school music teacher, Dr. Clemmons eventually received a full scholarship to Oberlin.

"And my music teacher in high school, Mr. Miller, became like a surrogate father. He was so good to me, and [with the principal] they helped me enter Oberlin."

Working in the dining hall in Oberlin to support his vocal studies, he met an older woman worker who invited him to eat exclusive soul food meals cooked by and for the staff. Clemmons recalled that as opposed to the all white, and some Asian faculty, all the dining hall workers were Black.

"I really felt God was smiling down on me, because why was I getting all the help? My voice teacher helped me, and here she was feeding me. Always, the universe sent somebody to take care of me and I'm very much aware of that," Clemmons said.

Nearing 80 years old, he has a crystal clear memory of those who showed him kindness throughout his early singing career. Without the presence of family support, his determination enabled him to find a community of adults who took his rich musical talent seriously. Dr. Clemmons was so determined as a teenager that he informed his family of his enrollment in art school after receiving financial and academic acceptance, having completed all of his applications independently.

Dr. Clemmons' luck in finding mentors unfortunately did not manifest in other parts of his life. He was vulnerable in our interview, sharing stories of family turmoil and moving from Alabama to Youngstown at five years old. Clemmons told The Campus that growing up during the Civil Rights Era as a gay man was extremely difficult.

"People were very kind to me, but I was gay. I didn't have a boyfriend — I couldn't have a boyfriend. I heard what they said about faggots and what they said about gay people… So I had a terrible time trying to figure out: who am I? What does this mean?"

Social stigma around homosexuality affected him in his role in Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. Fred Rogers invited Dr. Clemmons on his show after seeing him regularly perform spirituals on Sundays at a Church in Pittsburgh, PA. When Clemmons told Rogers that he wanted to come out publicly, Rogers responded with doubt.

"He said, 'People will say bad things, terrible things about you if they find out. They don't want a gay person who's openly gay on a children's television program.' I have learned [being gay] has made no difference. It does not make any sense but that's how they very stupidly felt."

Dr. Clemmons reflected on the homophobia that permeated his environment and the painful decision he made after hearing Rogers' advice.

"Being gay was something that was going to taint and infect other heteronormative people. And so I went back into the closet because Mister Rogers meant so much to me by that time. I couldn't tolerate losing his love or pushing him away, so I went back into the closet. I stayed there for 10 years."

On one hand, Dr. Clemmons' career was defined by artistic expression and boldness. He seemingly never struggled with performing in front of vast crowds populated with the likes of Martin Luther King Jr., whom Clemmons fondly remembers meeting when Dr. King gave a speech in Oberlin.

On the other hand, a crucial part of Dr. Clemmons' identity was suppressed for significant years of his life and career. His friends and family flat-out denied his sexuality in adolescence. Then, he confronted the homophobia of the public eye that said he would be shamed and shunned as a pervert just for who he wanted to love.

Rogers eventually encouraged Clemmons to come out after the 1969 Stonewall Riots had shifted public opinion, even becoming friends with Clemmons' boyfriend who would visit the show's set.

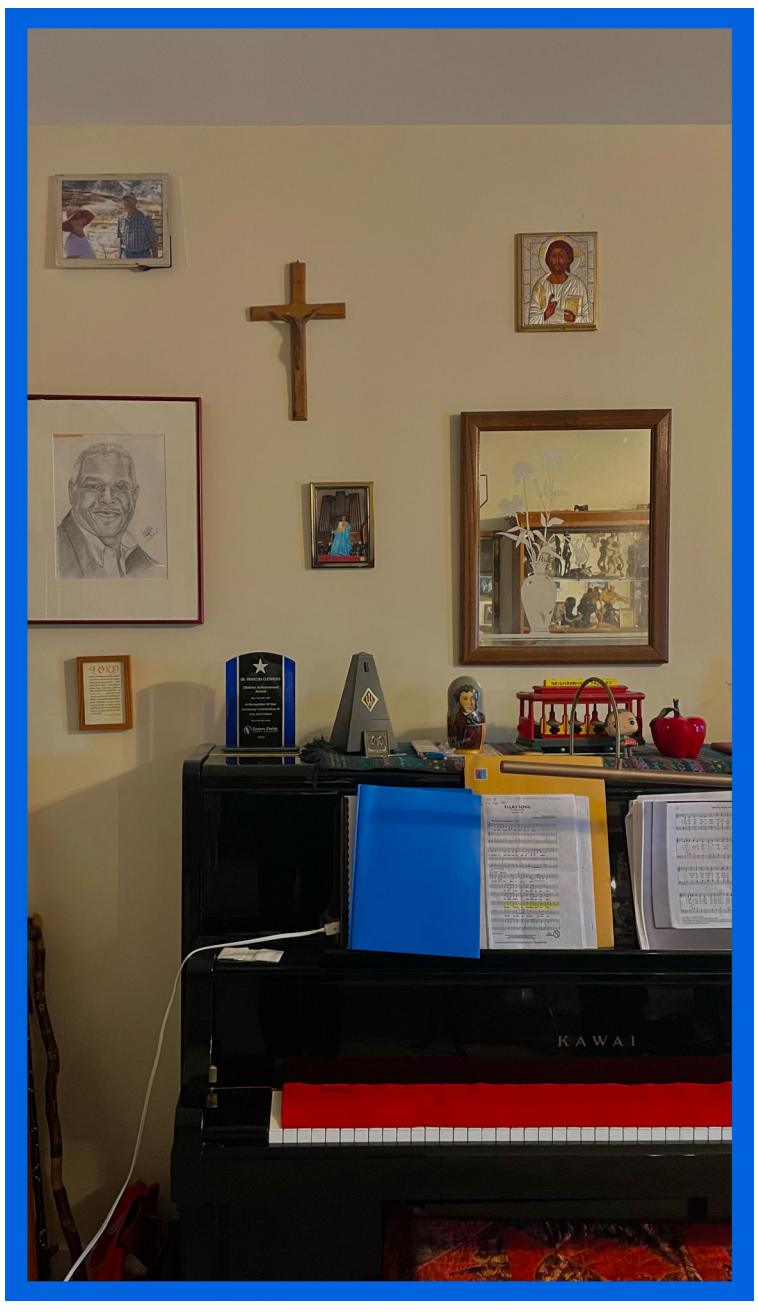
Sitting in Dr. Clemmons' living room, I reflected on what I heard as I took in my surroundings. Admiring his collection of fabulous trinkets, homoerotic statues and excellent sense of fashion glinting off of his jewelry, I basked in his presence of unapologetic, veteran authenticity.

Be sure to check out his acclaimed autobiography, "Officer Clemmons," for the 1 million and 1 stories not included in this article.

A sample of Dr. Clemmons' home ornamentation.

PHOTOS BY JUNE SU / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Dr. Clemmons in his apartment during our conversation.



Dr. Clemmons gave examples of Schumann, Schubert, Mozart, Handel, Pucini and various American Negro Spirituals as as projects he has worked on in his lifetime.